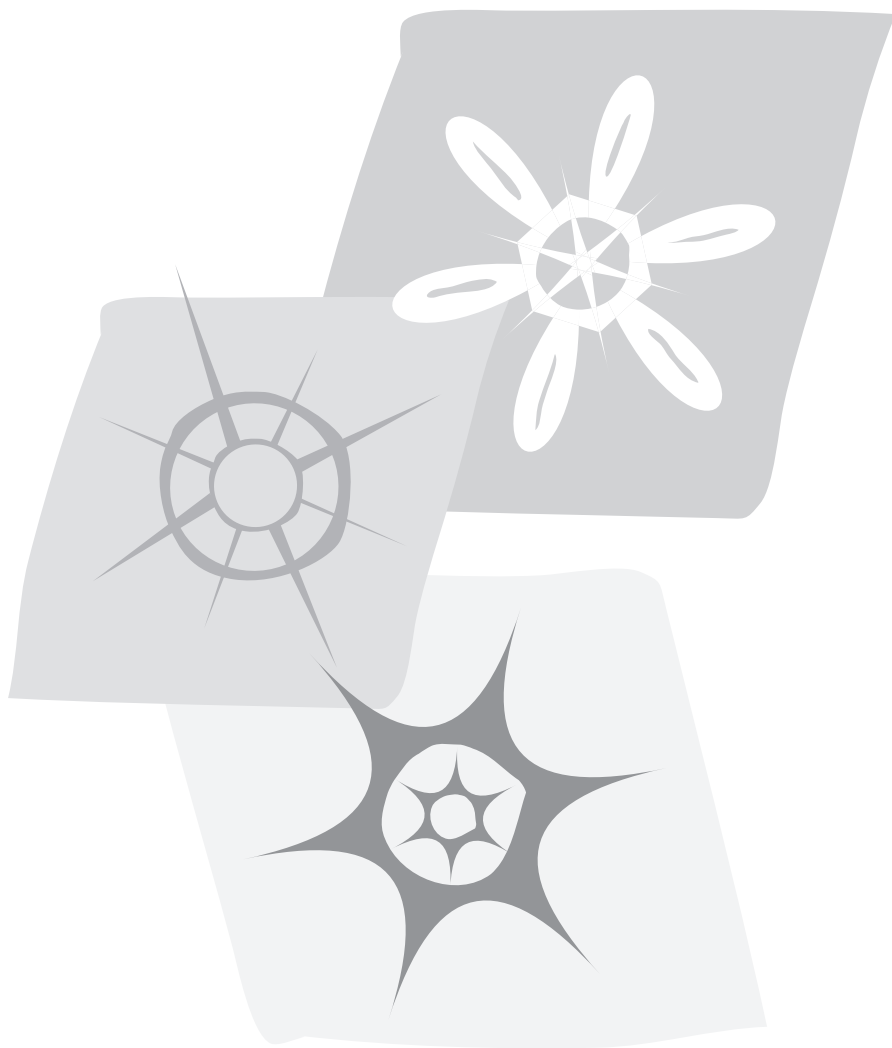


C^{The} Chronicle



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2004

KARMA CO-OP STAFF

GENERAL MANAGER

Sarah Fairley

GROCERY MANAGER

James van Bolhuis

PRODUCE MANAGER

Michael Armstrong

HEALTH AND BEAUTY MANAGER

Sara Pulins

SHIFT MANAGERS

Sheila Bannerjee

Paul Dixon

Michel Sauve

BOOKKEEPER

Victoria Bale

MEMBER LABOUR CO-ORDINATOR

Sara Pulins

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Marilou Lawrence

CLERKS

Naomi Fance

Mike Haliechuk

Lisa McLean

Sasha Seftor

Kevin Wyse

MISSION STATEMENT

Our aim is to:

1. create a community of actively participating members;
2. foster a healthy connection to the food we eat, the people who grow it, and the other organizations who share our beliefs;
3. co-operatively educate ourselves on environmental issues;
4. exercise political and economic control over our food;

by operating a viable co-operative food store.

KARMA CO-OP HOURS OF OPERATION

MONDAY	11-7	FRIDAY	10-9
TUESDAY	11-9	SATURDAY	10-6
WEDNESDAY	11-9	SUNDAY	11-5
THURSDAY	11-9		

www.karmacoop.org

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The Chronicle

February/March 2004

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The Chronicle is a link between members of this and other co-operative communities; the only viewpoints herein endorsed by Karma Co-op Inc. are those published as reports of the board of directors and its committees.

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Submissions

Submissions may be sent by e-mail, to chronicle@karmacoop.org. Send your submission within the main body of the message. Please do not send attachments. Submissions are also collected from the red box. Upcoming editorial deadlines are posted on the bulletin board and the box. All envelopes, articles and disks must be clearly marked with the authors name. *The Chronicle* will publish any Karma-related material, subject to editorial policy guidelines. Letters to the editor must contain the writers full name and telephone number, although names will be withheld at time of publication upon request. All published articles are eligible for work credits. Letters to the editor and announcements are not.

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GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

By: Sarah Fairley

It has been a busy couple of months at Karma — we are in the thick of Karma's busy season and it's great. The store is bustling with members and the feeling is good.

December's sales were higher than they have been over the last few years. Extra staff and extra member labour was needed to deal with this high volume of sales. Thankfully, member labour turnout was very good through the busiest part of the month, and on the whole we had the people we needed when we needed them.

Many members have commented recently that the out-of-stock rate has been pleasingly low. I hope that all members are finding the products they are looking for with greater consistency. James, Michael, and Sara have all been looking for ways to improve their out-of-stock rates. We are striving to keep all of the most popular products on the shelves at all times. The greatest challenges are limited storage space, the difficulty of predicting shopping trends, and suppliers being out of stock. I hope that you will continue to notice improvements as the staff continue to address these challenges in the coming months.

Normally this report includes updates on staffing changes — who has come, who has gone, who has a new role. But this month, there are no changes to report. Please see the back page for a list of Karma's dedicated staff.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I am writing as regards John Viktorin's letter (The Chronicle, August/ September 2003) and the board's response.

I responded to the request to shop more at Karma in order to resolve the potential financial problem. Although I live in the east end of Toronto, I have made an effort to visit Karma more frequently and to buy additional items that I may have purchased elsewhere in the course of an average month.

The continuing existence of this wonderful co-operative is important to me. Karma supports me by supporting the environment and by creating a space in Toronto where I can go and be joined by like-minded people. I've been a Karma member for over 20 years, and I anticipate that I will be a member for at least another 20.

Helena Ovens, N.D.

Over the past few months, I have been pondering the discussion about finances we had at the last AGM. The most obvious fact that emerged was our lack of knowledge concerning some really crucial numbers over time, although the Comparative Analysis of Operations 1998 to 2003, prepared for the meeting (I think) by Charlie Lior, was most helpful to me.

Causing considerable angst last October was that members seemed to be spending less of their food money at Karma. This fact had prompted a survey to find out why this was happening. Marilou Lawrence, our membership secretary, seemed fairly certain that our membership numbers had not changed significantly over the last five years or so. When I looked at Charlie's table, I was astonished: with (approximately?) the same number of members in 1998, total retail sales had been only \$967,185, yet in 2003 sales were \$1,459,742. Over the longer term, then, it seemed as if we were spending more at Karma, and that the dip of \$60,000 in sales from 2002 and 2003 was not so serious.

Still, I couldn't find reliable figures anywhere on the number of members going back to the early 1990s, when sales first hit \$1 million. According to the minutes of

the October 1991 AGM, our membership had reached 635 that year. In her 2002 report, Marilou told us we numbered "over 800."

A lot has changed since the early '90s. Debra Hayes pointed out at the meeting that there were only four managers then. And the October 1991 minutes indicated that we had 20 per cent non-working members, while this year Marilou told us that the number has, for all practical purposes, now slipped over the 50 per cent mark. At the same time, staff wages are up to 18.29 per cent of our total sales revenue. Since the meeting I have discovered that the average food store spends less than 10 per cent on wages, but it must be stressed that we are not an average food store

and we try to pay our staff decent wages and benefits. On the other hand, average stores don't have the labour of members to call upon.

There are many issues to be addressed here, but we can't do it without the right information. Accurate membership figures and sales totals adjusted for inflation would be a good start. These figures should be readily available, perhaps on the Web site, for all members who are trying to understand what's going on at Karma. If we did have 800 members in 1998, then obviously we weren't spending nearly as much shopping at Karma. Figures from the 1980s supplied by Alan Hahn, Karma's treasurer during the 1980s, show that we averaged about \$1,800 a year. Figures for 2003 suggest about the same amount. But that does not allow for inflation.

I had a useful conversation with Alan, which revealed that the problem of how many of members' food dollars go to Karma is (like member labour) a frequently recurring issue. Alan told me that a number of years of experience resulted in the decision over a decade ago that it was more effective to seek out new members than to persuade current members to spend more at Karma.

Personally, I don't think we should try to attract still more members. It's more important that current members acquire more of a sense of what Karma is all about. This way, the motive for shopping comes from something more profound than how much stuff costs or what our particular range of products is. Each of us, as a member, has a say in that sort of thing. And that's what makes Karma worthwhile.

Terry Fowler



KARMA COFFEE KLATCH

The Promotions Committee and Sandy Moon of Grapefruit Moon welcome you to an informative evening on the third Monday of each month.

On Monday, February 16, Karma member and holistic nutritionist Julie Daniluk will discuss natural remedies for candidiasis.

On Monday, March 15, life extension specialist Wayne Gendel will discuss detoxing for vibrant health.

Join us for the
Karma Coffee Klatch!

Grapefruit Moon
(968 Bathurst Street)

7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

Contact:
promotions@karmacoop.org
for more information.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Busy at Work

By Graeme Hussey, president

The last two months have been busy ones for the Karma board. In the middle of December the board met for a weekend retreat to identify and prioritize the work for the upcoming year. The board has a lot of work to attend to in the coming months. Our unique co-op structure — which involves working and non-working members, a volunteer board, and committees composed of volunteers — means that Karma constantly faces new and exciting challenges.

This year, in addition to the regular work of the board, we will focus on several issues that have already been identified by staff and members as priority items. Specifically, the board will focus on supporting our member labour system, re-establishing a stronger financial position, and promoting the co-op and our common values.

As promised at the AGM, we will work to support the implementation of several recommendations brought forward by the Member Labour Committee before the end of our fiscal year (May 31). Stay tuned in the store and in future issues of *The Chronicle* to see how these changes will affect you. The ongoing problem of volunteer turnover has made it difficult to retain organizational history, so the board is looking to develop a system that will better organize our files and knowledge. This will involve reorganizing the files in the members' room and better utilizing our Web site

to organize policies and bylaws.

The financial loss the co-op suffered during the 2003 fiscal year took many by surprise. The board and the finance committee are investigating ways to both increase our cash flow and better understand the consumer trends that our store experiences. We will also try to raise the profile of the co-op within our own membership and in the surrounding neighbourhood. We hope to achieve this by promoting and communicating the co-op's values with our neighbours and with similar organizations in the city.

We also hope to increase cohesion between work undertaken by Karma's committees and the board. In the past, individual committees and the board have often worked in isolation. To achieve this goal, it is important that we collectively identify the mission of each committee, set priorities for the upcoming year, and map out how to achieve these priorities.

Despite the overwhelming nature of these issues, I have been enthused by the many members who have expressed how much they care for the co-op and have offered their services to help. This has been greatly appreciated. If you are an artist, tradesperson or professional and would like to contribute more to your co-op, I encourage you to come forward as well! You can reach me at president@karmacoop.org.

FACILITATING INTER-COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING AND MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

January 'Karma Caucus' focuses on communication

By Bruce Erikson

The January Karma Caucus took place on the second-to-last Saturday of the month at the St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club, just up the street from the store. More than 15 members took part in a discussion that was intended to help facilitate communication among members, committees and the board at the co-op. The agenda was established based upon the vision and concerns of the participants at the caucus. As the discussion got under way, it was apparent that it would flow toward suggesting new processes of communication at the inter-committee level and between committees and members.

After a brief discussion about the present state of communication between various committees, the group broke into two working groups. A main concern that emerged was that decisions made within one committee sometimes had a large impact upon other committees, but without a discussion happening between the two groups. To address this, one of the working groups brainstormed possible improvements on inter-committee communication.

The second working group, meanwhile, discussed ways to engage non-committee members in the decisions made at the committee and board levels. It was noted that changes are often made, but that non-committee members only have time to discuss the changes after they have been adopted.

Several suggestions emerged out of the working group discussions. To improve the level of communication between committees, the caucus suggested that the liaison reports submitted to the board each month should also be sent to the committee chairs. Each committee could also keep a record of the decisions made and the issues being considered at each meeting in a "living decision" archive. Along with accurate minutes, these documents could be made available to the other committees when needed, through the chairpersons or the Web site.

To get more feedback from members, the caucus discussed several new approaches:

- a new-member questionnaire: when people join, and after their first three months
- comment sheets placed throughout the store for immediate feedback on different products and store issues

continued on next page...

FACILITATING INTER-COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING AND MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

January 'Karma Caucus' focuses on communication continued

- a buddy system for new members that would see them paired with senior members, to help people get on their feet in the Karma community (a buddy system would also be good for members with children, so babysitting could be shared)
- making sure that all information about meetings and committee work is in all possible areas (the Web site, The Chronicle, and in the store)

At the end of the caucus, there was also some discussion around the use of a general set of training seminars for committees and members. These seminars, which might focus on communication, facilitation, finances, or product policy, would be able to keep people involved in discussions on how Karma works.

The suggestions stemming from this Karma Caucus will be taken to the board in order to find direct strategies for implementation.

If you are interested in helping out or attending future events such as the Karma Caucus, please contact the Promotions Committee via promotions@karmacoop.org or the board via board@karmacoop.org.

MEMBER LABOUR COMMITTEE REPORT

Keeping Karma a Better Place to Shop — and Work

By Brendan Heath (Ad Hoc Member Labour Committee)

When membership secretary Marilou Lawrence and former member labour coordinator Betsy Carter made their presentations at the 2002 AGM, it was clear that there was a significant problem at Karma.

Up to 25 per cent of the in-store work shifts — the set-up, cash, and

clean-up shifts that ensure the store is running smoothly on a day-to-day basis — weren't being filled. We were also told that our population of working members has been shrinking relative to the non-working population for some years.

Up to 25 per cent of the in-store work shifts...weren't being filled.

With each increase in non-working membership — whether by choice or because a member has fallen behind in hours — Karma pays for the additional staff time needed. At the 2002 AGM, the question was raised as to whether the non-working surcharge was an equitable contribution compared to the two hours a month that working members are expected to work.

Faced with these problems, the Karma board decided to establish

the Ad Hoc Member Labour Committee. Our initial goal was to increase working member accountability, retention and participation through better orientation, communications,

...members don't always need to work a single two-hour shift in order to meet their two-hours-per-month commitment.

coordination, tracking and regulation in our member labour system. We have also tried to guarantee that the contributions of both working and non-working members are fair, equal and adequate to the needs of our co-op as a whole.

In the first few months of the Ad Hoc Member Labour Committee's existence, we developed goals and objectives and the strategies to achieve them. Leading up to and following the 2003 AGM, we worked primarily on the issues of the work shifts cash equivalent and the non-working surcharge. We used the earlier work done by John

Bowers and outlined in the June/July 2003 issue of *The Chronicle* as a starting point. In that article, John discussed the idea of improving equity and the adequacy of contributions, as well as the rationale behind the increase in both the surcharge and the work shifts cash equivalent. The implementation date for these board-approved policy changes is June 1 (the beginning of Karma's next fiscal year).

In the coming months, in the spirit of open communication, we will be informing you of the changes in a number of ways including an article in the next issue of *The Chronicle* and printed

announcements in the store. We will also be working on a flyer to explain the changes.

Flexibility means no excuses!

It was suggested at this year's AGM that the reason so many members join as working members, don't work, eventually go on surcharge and convert to non-working membership is that they can't find flexible work opportunities.

In fact, you'd be surprised at how much flexibility there is in our current system. The most common shifts — and also the most important ones for running the store on a day-to-day basis — are set-up before

continued on next page...

MEMBER LABOUR COMMITTEE REPORT

Keeping Karma a Better Place to Shop — and Work
continued

opening, cash shifts during the day, and clean-up after closing. Given Karma's opening hours, someone could start their shift as early as 8 am (set-up) or as late as 8:30 pm (clean-up).

In addition, members don't always need to work a single two-hour shift in order to meet their two-hours-per-month commitment. People often perform their member labour in one-hour spurts on either clean-up or set-up, and it's common for cashiers to work a three-hour shift.

Working shifts of three hours or longer (such as on cash or inventory) aren't just good ways to work off hours when you fall behind, but can also be a great way to get ahead if you know you're going to be busy later. If you're a student like me, you may want to work longer shifts early in the semester or over the break so you don't fall behind in hours and possibly end up on surcharge at the end of term.

There are opportunities to contribute to the co-op beyond this important day-to-day work. If you have particular skills, you can help Karma through committee work — which might test anything from your creativity to your research and technical skills. Odd jobs are also rou-

tinely created through the day-to-day running of the co-op, as well as the work of committees and the board.

You are your most valuable resource in terms of finding ways to fulfill your work commitment at Karma. But if you run into difficulties, Sara Pulins, the member labour coordinator, can help you find your niche. You can reach her at mlc@karmacoop.org.

I look forward to explaining the upcoming changes in the coming months. By working through this transition together, building equity and finding the best way in which we can all contribute to our community, we will make sure that Karma stays "a better way to shop."

For more information on the upcoming changes, check the Member Labour Committee binder stored in the members' room. The most up-to-date information will be available on our website, found at www.karmacoop.org/committees/memberlabour.html. The Member Labour Committee can be contacted via labourcommittee@karmacoop.org.

We want to make sure that these changes to our co-op strengthen it as a store and as a community.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

By Suzanne Molina

Turtle's Fish Products

Karma recently started carrying whitefish and trout from the Giigooghkea Co-operative, located on the Cape Croker First Nation near Warton, Ontario.

According to the Giigooghkea Co-op, whitefish (*tikmeg* in Ojibwe) are abundant in the deep waters surrounding Ontario's Bruce Peninsula. They reach an average length of 15 inches, weigh on average from two to five pounds, and feed near the bottom, surviving on plankton, mollusks, insect larvae and crustaceans. They are native to the Great Lakes.

Trout (*nmegos* in Ojibwe) are a non-native species introduced to the Great Lakes through hatchery stocking programs, Giigooghkea says. This predator fish — which eats smelt, white perch, and yellow perch, as well as insects and crayfish — is a hybrid species, bred from speckled trout and lake trout. As a result, it is known as "splake." Splake trout range from 17 to 27 inches in length, and weigh on average from two to six pounds.

Both whitefish and trout are good sources of protein and friendly monounsaturated fats. They also contain the building blocks for healthy cell development as well as muscle, nerve, and bone growth: vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin B¹², selenium, zinc, and magnesium.

Fishers from the Cape Croker and Saugeen reserves supply the Giigooghkea Co-op with over one million pounds of fish every year in a sustainable harvest using traditional aboriginal fishery practices endorsed by biologists from the University of Guelph. The Giigooghkea Co-op vacuum packs individual fillets and pieces and freezes them immediately after processing to preserve both flavour and texture. The fish are not deboned.

Karma carries both skinned whole whitefish fillets (averaging 10 to 14 ounces in size) and portioned pieces of trout (averaging eight ounces). Customized products can be requested by special order.

The Chippewas of Nawash at Cape Croker and the Chippewas of Saugeen maintained a subsistence and commercial fishery for thousands of years until it was taken over by non-Native fishers and the Canadian government. Ten years ago, their right to a commercial fishery was returned in a court decision.

Giigooghkea — which is Ojibwe for "fishing" — is a worker-owned co-op made up of both fishers and fish processors.



BRITA FILTERS: A BENIGN CHOICE?

Karma discontinues Brita products

By the Food Issues Committee

The Food Issues Committee has completed an analysis of the Brita products we carry at Karma. Based on our analysis of these products and the company that produces them, we have asked that they be discontinued in the store. Karma will continue to sell the remaining stock of filters and pitchers until they have run out.

There were several reasons for this decision, all of which were based on Karma's new Product Policy, adopted in the fall of 2002. The first is what is termed "ethical considerations." The Product Policy stipulates the following: "Our decisions to buy products are also decisions to support relationships with the human and animal inhabitants of our communities. Inexpensive, widely available products should not be obtained at the cost of exploitation and pain: those ends cannot justify those means. Accordingly, we condemn testing products for toxicity by using animals." Clorox, which is the parent company of Brita, is listed by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals as a company that is currently testing some of its products on animals. (For more information please go to PETA's Web site or see www.caringconsumer.org/page/CompaniesDo.pdf) For this reason, all Clorox products, including Brita water pitchers and filters, must necessarily be on Karma's list of condemned products.

Second, the Product Policy addresses environmental considerations, stating: "Our decisions to buy products are also decisions to support physical systems of production and distribution, with consequences that can be destructive, benign, or beneficial to the natural environment. We oppose wasteful packaging, especially when there is no effective way to biodegrade or recycle what cannot be reused." Brita recently stopped its recycling initiative. Now both the Brita filters and the concentrated chemicals they contain end up in landfill.

In addition, Brita filters and pitchers are difficult products for Karma to carry. Brita products are mainstream items, available everywhere, so larger retailers can offer better pricing on Brita products due to their volume purchasing. Financially speaking, it will not hurt Karma to stop selling these products. We will still be able to honour our mandate to "operate a viable co-operative food store."

The facts on water

The Food Issues Committee understands that everyone has the right to clean drinking water. Torontonians are most concerned with the presence of residual chlorine, which is put there by the city, and of chemicals such as lead, which leach from the plumbing in our homes. The best option for drinking water is to "air" a large pitcher of tap water for 24 hours prior to drinking. This will allow the chlorine to evaporate naturally, and will fully remove the chlorine odour and taste. To remove some of the lead and other chemicals leached from pipes, flush your pipes before filling up your water pitcher. Wash your dishes or take a shower first to get the standing water in your pipes moving — then fill up your pitcher. Also, use only the cold water taps for drinking water, and have your water tested if you're really concerned about the state of your pipes.

The City of Toronto feels that our water quality is fine. In the latest report on Toronto's drinking water, of the seven "harmful impurities" that a Brita filter is capable of removing, for example, the only one that is actually present in our drinking water as it leaves Toronto's treatment plant is copper. However, in all the city's tests, copper appeared far below the acceptable limit. For the city's latest report, go to www.city.toronto.on.ca/water/quality_report/pdf/2003_04_06.pdf. For a breakdown of Brita's various filtering products (pitcher, faucet, water coolers, or the sporty "fill and go"), and what each is capable of removing, please see www.brita.com/102i.html. And for additional tips on making tap water safer to drink, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Web site at www.epa.gov/safewater/lead/lead1.html.

If non-filtered tap water does not seem like a reasonable option for you, Karma does offer other non-filter options to its members. The store sells bottled water in 11 litre and 18 litre sizes. These bottles have a returnable deposit.

The Food Issues Committee does not intend to pass judgement on any member who wishes to buy Brita products. We only wish to enact our mandate as a committee.

We would like to know your opinions on this decision, on the Brita products line, on water filtration and safe drinking water, and on any other non-filter alternatives you see. We would also like to know how well we are communicating our findings to the membership. E-mail us at foodissues@karmacoop.org with your questions and comments.

If you'd like more information about the Food Issues Committee, our mandate, or the Product Policy, please go to Karma's Web site at www.karmacoop.org.

RECIPE:

VEGAN CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM

Courtesy of Karma member
Dan Allman, currently in
Scotland at the University of Edinburgh.



Dan writes: "While there are several nice health-food stores here, there is nothing as fabulous as Karma. I miss Karma and clean-up! I want to share a fantastic recipe for vegan chocolate ice cream. I got it from rural Iowa's Jamie Heckert. It's divine and easy and uses just a few ingredients — all of which I believe are available on the shelves of Karma (save for the liquor, of course). Let's see if I don't next send a recipe for vegetarian haggis. It is true . . . few things are as delicious. If you experiment with the recipe, please let me know by e-mail: d.b.s.allman@sms.ed.ac.uk. I have made it without the liquor and it is superb. I also think that cinnamon and/or raspberries might be really good in it."

Vegan Chocolate Ice Cream

400 ml tin coconut milk
200 g dark chocolate, or two 7 oz. bars (sweetened, not bittersweet)*
10 tbsp. icing sugar
1 1/2 tbsp. rum or other liquor (optional)

*this kind of dark chocolate is generally dairy-free

Put coconut milk, chocolate, and rum in a bowl over a pan of simmering water and heat gently, stirring occasionally, until melted. Stir in icing sugar until smooth. Pour mixture into freezer-safe container and freeze until firm. Take out five minutes before serving (this is very important as the ice cream can taste bitter when completely frozen but is amazingly good five minutes later!).

Makes a rich chocolate ice cream, with a hint of coconut flavour.



COMPOSTING AT KARMA — A REMINDER

There is a compost bin in the produce section! Sometimes it's on the floor in front of the produce cooler, and sometimes it's under the counter near the bulk spices. Just look for the rectangular blue bin full of veggie castoffs. If you remove your carrot tops prior to leaving the store, or if you eat an apple or other compost-friendly snack while you shop, please put the discarded material in the compost bin, and *not* in the garbage located in the produce section. (Please remove any twist ties and labels beforehand.)
The earth thanks you!

EVERYDAY ACTIVIST

By Lis Soderberg

Everyday Activist returns next issue with the first of a series on socially responsible investing. In the meantime, don't forget to send your 'convenience food' recipes to soderberg@goodmedia.com, or call Lis at (416) 656-2331

Remember, the recipes need to be:

- easy/convenient to make (including easily accessible ingredients and simple, speedy preparation techniques)
- nutritious
- delicious!
- economical, and
- good for the planet as well as our bodies (locally, sustainably, organically).