

The Chronicle

SPRING 2015

**HONEYBEES IN THE CITY
MARVELLOUS MATCHA
SUSTAINABLE LIVING**

CONTENTS

Report from the acting GM3
Report from the board of directors4
Report from the Community Development Committee ...5
Report from the Social Events Committee6
Simple steps to special ordering.....7
On the rack.....8
Report from the Finance Committee9
Staff profile: James Byrne..... 10
Doing my bit for a sustainable future 11
Almond milk and bee health..... 13
Hello, honeybees..... 14
Wining and dining, direct from Niagara 16
Meet your matcha 18
Product spotlight: Explore Asian gluten-free noodles ... 19
In the aisle 20
The joy of cooking on a budget 22

The Chronicle is published by members of Karma Co-op

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The Chronicle is a link between members of this and other co-operative communities. The only viewpoints endorsed by Karma Co-op Inc. are those published as reports of the board of directors and its committees. This newsletter is printed on Enviro100 stock, which contains FSC-certified 100 per cent post-consumer fibre. The paper is certified EcoLogo, processed chlorine free, and manufactured using biogas energy. It is union-made in Canada by Cascades Fine Papers.

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We welcome submissions from any Karma member, staff, or board member!

Submissions may be sent by email to chronicle@karmacoop.org. The Chronicle will publish material related to Karma Co-op, subject to our editorial policy. Letters to the editor must contain the writer's full name and telephone number, although names will be withheld at time of publication upon request. Published articles are eligible for work credits (letters to the editor, announcements, and pieces that have already been published elsewhere are not).

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Cover photo by Joanna Wojewoda

Report from the acting GM

by Rachel Yanchyshyn



This month, I've been thinking about what sets Karma Co-op apart. The fact that we've been open for over 40 years is no small feat — not many Toronto businesses can claim the same thing. Yet now that organic, local, and sustainably produced food is easier to come by in Toronto, there has to be something more than just our products that keeps Karma in business. And there is. It's the word next to Karma that sets us apart: "Co-op." The Ontario Co-operative Association describes co-ops as "community-based organizations that care not only about the bottom lines of their business, but about the needs of their members and the quality of life in their communities." What distinguishes co-operatives from other businesses is that co-ops "balance their energies between economic and social concerns." I think this describes our food co-op very well, and is also why we all

need to work together to support it.

We've seen gradually increasing sales over the past year, but we still need continued support in that area, as well as in member engagement. Working in the store is a real advantage to being a co-op member — you get to meet people, learn how the store works, and enhance the sense of community among members. Your work is valued and integral to day-to-day store operations, and it's simple to sign up.

As always, the staff continues to work hard around the store, stocking the shelves with your favourite items and keeping an eye out for exciting new products. The organic seeds are one of my personal favourites, heralding a spring soon to come!



Goodbye to Michael Armstrong

Very sadly, Michael Armstrong, Karma's longtime produce manager and assistant general manager, left the co-op in February. He has provided wonderful service to Karma and its members during his 16 years on staff, and we thank him for making our produce department the best in the city. We'll miss his gentle presence that touched so many of us here at the co-op. Whether chatting with him about music or the latest trend in vegetable prices, anyone who interacted with Michael appreciated his open, friendly nature.

While this is goodbye, it isn't for good, as Michael promises to join the co-op and shop here in the future — because of "the bulk maple syrup, man!" We'll hold you to that, Michael! All the best in your future endeavours. You'll always have a special place in our Karma hearts.



Photo from Karma files

Report from the board of directors



by Paul Danyluk

The 2014–15 board has settled in, with a couple of recent changes. Curtis Herle resigned from the board last month; we thank him for his contribution and his continued support of Karma. In early February, former board member Rick Conroy stepped up to fill a vacant spot. We now have nine board members — so there is one more available seat at the table for an interested member! With many new members on the board, we have been focused on orientation and role assignment so the co-op can get the full benefit of the skills and energy we all bring to the work of governance.

Priorities for the board include better information management, better use of budgeting tools to predict and respond to the co-op's finances, and succession planning. We've already taken a big leap forward by streamlining the way we share information among ourselves, including meeting minutes, agendas, and discussion papers. With the guidance of the Finance Committee and input from other committees, a comprehensive budget has been drafted that allows us to plan effectively and to quickly understand the financial impact of our decisions. Tools like regular budgets and better-managed information play a role in succession planning as the board looks to improve knowledge transfer and ensure greater continuity.

Sales have remained above their levels over the same period last year.

Sales have remained above their levels over the same period last year. This is a testament to our products, our staff, and the commitment that you, our members, show to our co-op. That said, there is always more to do to ensure our store stays open and competitive. In January, the board launched a Sales Taskforce with the aim of creating the stability we need to survive and thrive. Made up of interim general manager Rachel Yanchyshyn, board members Melissa Berney and Samantha Hicks, and former board member Arel Agnew, this team will explore new marketing initiatives and craft a strategic sales plan that aligns with Karma's mission.

As store sales have increased, we continue to face the challenge of using member labour effectively. The board created a Member Labour Taskforce in January to better understand what is happening in terms of hours worked and how effectively that work is being allocated to support all store functions. Together with Rachel and staff member Cara Gold, board members Roberta Benson and Paul Danyluk are exploring solutions to the challenge. In the short term, the first step is a return to work teams with coordinators responsible for filling shifts and orienting new working members.

Report from the Community Development Committee

by Jennie Lee

Over this past holiday season, our outreach team attended the Wychwood EcoFair in November and the Pop-Up Market (dedicated to ethical and sustainable gifts) at the Annex Centre for Social Innovation in December. As we often do at these like-minded neighbourhood events, we made contact with people interested in learning more about Karma. We are currently working on a new marketing strategy for prospective shoppers and members who connect with us online or at events.

Inside the store, we worked on Karma's annual Holiday Gift Guide to encourage holiday shopping at the co-op while supporting local and ethical businesses, and we promoted this guide on social media. Over the dormant winter season, we also made updates to our website and set up web analytics to guide future website optimization.

Karma's new infographic store map is now complete. We have been looking for an ideal place for it in the store, and soon it will help all members, new and old, to discover and rediscover the amazing variety of goods available at Karma.

We are gearing up for the spring and summer season with the following initiatives:

- organizing a spring potluck and community photo-op in May
- studying online ordering as a way to increase sales
- launching a new promotional poster in the community
- helping to plan a joint event with the Palmerston Library in June
- attending more community outreach events, including local markets

Outreach

a great way to earn your member labour hours while having fun!

The Community Development Committee organizes outreach tables at events in our neighbourhood that relate to Karma's focus and values. We talk to people about Karma and invite them to shop at our store.

Events we attended last year included the Toronto GMO-Free Festival, the Annex Festival on Bloor, and the Toronto RAW/Vegan Festival.

If you are interested in joining our outreach team, please contact Sylvie at outreach@karmacoop.org.



Photo by Sylvie Goldfain

Report from the Social Events Committee.....

by Tom Smarda

Last month, the Social Events Committee held its annual Valentine's Day Chocolate Fondue event, which this year happened to fall exactly on Valentine's Day. Using Karma's organic fruit and vegan marshmallows, we dipped bite-sized morsels into melted fair-trade dark chocolate. Now, I'm not a big chocolate consumer because I can't have "just one," but I made an exception this time between strumming a few, hopefully ambient, chords on my guitar. Enjoyable mix 'n' mingle conversation flowed.



if the weather is nice by then, we'll be able to set up tables outside.

By May, it should be warm out! It will be Plant Exchange time at Karma. Bring your little cuttings or offshoots to trade. Plant and replant; stick those roots in the ground. Perennials are nice. Even little snips of succulent mint (uh-oh, an "invasive plant") will grow new roots if placed in moist soil. May is mostly moist. The hot summer sun has not yet fried everything. That's for next month.

This month, a week after the spring equinox, the Social Events Committee will host the annual Book and Yarn Exchange. What better excuse does one need to shake off the last hints of cabin fever? Drop in at Karma to have a tea and share any books, needlework materials, or yarns that may have accumulated in the past season. It just might be that special something another member has been seeking.

Whatever you haven't yet shared, you are invited to do so at the Everything Else Exchange in June. And just because you might not have brought anything

Be sure not to miss the Spring Health Fair in April! In past years, Karma has showcased healing arts such as body realignment with the mitzvah technique, homeopathy, organic free-trade body scrubs and lotions, and acupuncture. If you have something that you would like to share with members, please contact us and we can make arrangements. There are as many modalities of healing as there are flowers in a field. Hopefully,



Photos by Joanna Wojewoda

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to swap doesn't mean that you aren't entitled to help yourself to whatever is available. We've had clothes and books and all sorts of neat little knick-knacks displayed on tables, and members were hesitant to help themselves. Please do! ☕

Spring events at Karma

All events run from 11 am to 3 pm and are free!

Book and Yarn Exchange

Saturday, March 28

Spring Health Fair

Saturday, April 18

Plant Exchange

Saturday, May 23

Everything Else Exchange

Saturday, June 13

Simple steps to special ordering •••••

by Kate Rusnak

Did you know that if you can't find a product on our store shelves, you can try to "special order" it? This service is available to all members and means you can likely do more of your shopping at Karma. Here are some details to help you get started.

What can I special order?

Karma has a vast array of products you can purchase through special orders. Find and flip through the many supplier catalogues in the staff office, or ask a staff member about a specific item. Here's a small sample of our supplier catalogues and the types of products they carry:

- Ontario Natural Food Co-op — grocery and refrigerated items
- Purity Life — health and beauty products
- Corwin — grocery, beauty, and cleaning products
- Neal Brothers Foods — snack items
- A & E Fine Foods — bulk-bin items

How much does it cost?

There is no additional charge for special orders. However, the prices listed in the supplier catalogues are not what you pay. The catalogue prices are what the supplier charges Karma (wholesale), and then Karma adds its store mark-up fee, which differs depending on item and membership type. It's best to check with staff about the actual price of the item before ordering it.

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Important note Unless you specify “Price check” on your order form, placing an order in the special orders box is a commitment to buy the product.

Where do I place a special order?

Special order forms and the special order box are located on the shelving unit just outside the members’ room in the store. You will need to fill out one special order form per item being ordered.

When will I receive my order?

The special order box is checked by staff on Tuesdays. Ask staff approximately how long it will take to get your item from the supplier. When items arrive, you’re notified and items are placed on the special orders shelf for pick-up. 🍌

Cheese, please!

Karma now offers special orders on bulk cheese. This is great news for all your upcoming parties and events! La Ferme and Glen Echo Fine Foods supply our special cheese orders. Check with a staff member about the types of cheese and quantities that can be ordered, and remember to ask about pricing before you submit your form.

Photo by Joanna Wojewoda

On the rack •••••

by Sybille Parry

Karma’s magazine selection features a range of interesting titles. Here are two that caught our eye.

Title: *Permaculture Activist*

Website: permacultureactivist.net

In a nutshell: An independent quarterly serving the permaculture movement in North America. Theme-based issues offer practical advice to people involved in growing food.



Notable: The word “permaculture” signifies “permanent agriculture” or “permanent culture.”

Quotable: “Fossil fuels have offered us the illusion of perfect regularity and endless abundance, but they have led us into a dangerous place.”

Title: *Vegetarian Times*

Website: vegetariantimes.com

Tagline: Eat green. Live well.

In a nutshell: A cornucopia of recipes for vegetarians and vegans, connected to a huge online archive. Celebrated 40 years of “fabulous food and community” in 2014.



Notable: John Lennon and Yoko Ono subscribed for three years.

Quotable: “Way back in November 1973, Paul Obis ... in Chicago made local TV news simply by celebrating Thanksgiving with a vegetarian feast.”



Report from the Finance Committee

by Quincin Chan

The Finance Committee strives to help Karma look for ways to reduce expenses and increase profits. One area that continues to come up in our discussions is how to reduce shrinkage. Shrinkage is defined as lost inventory. Some



of the most common causes of shrinkage include theft, accounting or vendor errors, and spoilage. At Karma, spoilage is probably the biggest cause of shrinkage. Produce, dairy, and bread are the categories with the highest shrinkage because their shelf lives are the shortest. Of these categories, bread is the hardest to understand and control because its sales pattern is the most unpredictable. There are weeks when no bread is left on the shelf, and other weeks when sales are so low that a high percentage of bread becomes spoiled. This raises a few questions: Why do co-op members buy bread at Karma on some weeks but not others? Assuming that bread is a staple item in most households, where else do members buy their bread? What factors affect bread-buying decisions? With competition identified as a potential factor, we decided to compare our bread selection with three local competitors to see how our pricing stacks up and if we provide a good variety.



We compared the cost of bread at Karma with the prices at Noah's Natural Foods, Herbs & Nutrition,

and the Big Carrot. Overall, Karma's bread price is better than the Big Carrot, but the east-end co-op thrives on variety. When it comes to the local competitors within walking distance, Noah's and Herbs & Nutrition, prices are much closer. On average, the working members' bread price at Karma is about five per cent lower than Noah's and on par with Herbs & Nutrition. However, it's worth noting that Karma has much greater variety in both regular and gluten-free bread.

The analysis shows that Karma has both competitive bread prices and an edge in terms of variety. As a result, price and variety do not seem to be major factors for the fluctuating demand. It is unknown whether in trying to provide a wide variety of brands and types of bread, Karma suffers from a greater shrinkage cost. The study did not provide enough evidence to prove that reducing variety will lower shrinkage. Further study in members' shopping behaviour will need to be done to identify the reason for bread's unpredictable sales.



Photos by Joanna Wojewoda



Staff profile: James Byrne

by Georgia Ydreos

James Byrne began working as a part-time retail associate in April 2014. While speaking to him, I was struck once again by the depth of wisdom and dedication that Karma Co-op staff members bring to their work. James wears many hats in the Toronto farm-to-table community, and it was wonderful to learn about the unique constellation of passions that sustain his work at Karma.

How did you discover Karma?

I first heard about it while I was at school. I went to Fleming College (in Lindsay, Ont.) for sustainable agriculture, and Karma came up when we were discussing places to sell farmed goods. When I moved back to Toronto, I made a point of finding it and walking by since I had never knew where it was.

What other work do you do when you aren't here at Karma?

I work weekends at Karma, and through the week I work at Alternative Grounds, another fair trade coffee source in Toronto. I also started my own business just over a year ago doing urban farming. It's called Postage Stamp Urban Farm. Outside of that, I'm working with a group in Parkdale that is creating a rooftop garden.

What do you love about working at Karma?

Besides what we do — sourcing sustainable and local food, doing the best we can day-to-day in the process of sourcing — I love talking with staff and members. Food is a great gateway to other conversations. It sounds hokey, but really, one of the biggest perks of working here is the people.



What is your favourite product at Karma?

My favourite just went out of season: the d'Anjou pears. Another product that we carry all year round would be Damien's Lima Zulu hot sauce. It has become my new sriracha. I like adding it to soup. It has a nice mix of vinegar and spice.

What is special about Karma Co-op?

The skylights are one of the little hidden gems at Karma. Natural light makes such a difference. You notice it when you look at what is on display. Even in the dairy aisle, there is a skylight overhead.

Is there something you've learned about through working at Karma?

Music! I've been learning a lot about Indian music through Leah.* Also, there is a focus at Karma on Congolese music. The past few months, as I just started working here, I've definitely been holding back from adding my own music to the playlists because fellow staff play such great "deep cuts." So far I have mostly focused on listening and learning.

**Leah, Karma's health and beauty buyer, studied and worked in India. See Leah's staff profile in the Autumn 2013 Chronicle, available online at karmacoop.org/the-chronicle-archive.*

Photo by Joanna Wojewoda

Doing my bit for a sustainable future

by Laura Coramai

Thinking about sustainability on a global scale — from energy, water, food, and transportation, through to education and health matters — can be daunting. Nonetheless, the time to act is now, and all of us at Karma are already contributing to the shift in so many creative ways. On a micro or personal level, I've been trying to make my own household part of the solution. Here are some ideas for living sustainably.

Clean and green



When it comes to cleaning products, the more bulk, the better so as to avoid excess packaging. Nature Clean's bulk dishwashing liquid and all-purpose cleaner are great. I have two bottles of each and fill up at the pump when one is getting low so I'm ready to wash up at

all times. I'm also finding that with elbow grease and the tried-and-true combo of *vinegar* and *baking soda*, it's not really necessary to have a huge array of products in my cupboards.

For the dishwasher, I love Home Solv by Citra Solv. The powder doesn't clump, and I have the option to use half the suggested amount and still get my load nice and clean with no residue.

Washing our clothes is a big one, environmentally speaking. For the least amount of impact, I buy soap nuts at Karma. What are these, you ask? Essentially they are tree fruits that have long been used in India and Nepal as detergents and foaming agents. Their large amount of saponins acts as a natural surfactant. A handful can be reused for as many as 15 to 30 loads. (I place them in a little cotton bag so they don't get scattered throughout the clothes.) A 500 gram bag of soap nuts lasts my household a year, and they cost under \$15!

Beauty basics

Karma offers bulk soaps, shampoos, and conditioners, giving you the ability to refill your own bottles. I like Dr. Bronner's castile soap for hand washing and body scrubbing, and Quebec's Oneka shampoo and conditioner for my hair.



A simple skin cleanser is Thayers witch hazel, an old-time remedy that hails from 1847. The one with aloe vera is great when you get itchy after too much sun. A little Thayers on a cotton swab is also good for cleaning ears and belly buttons in place of strong astringents like rubbing alcohol and hydrogen peroxide. Try it on your face as well. Look, Ma, no drying out!

Continued from previous page

If you moisturize from the inside out (drink lots of pure water and take mineral salts for absorption), you'll save money on buying lotions. When you need a good moisturizer, though, support sustainable and locally made Anarres products. I also recommend the wonderful Anarres deodorant, which smells fantastic and as a bonus helps with lymphatic drainage. It's under \$10 and will last at least three months if used sparingly — a dab will do it!

Field to table

Sustainable food is about cooking from scratch as much as you can. Bulk is best yet again: honey, spices, oils, tamari, miso, maple syrup, coffees, and teas. And let's not forget nuts, nut butters, and grains. (Ideally, it would be best if we could scoop our own bulk goods at Karma and not have them pre-bagged. But some of the bins are leaky, and so for cleanliness reasons the products can't be loose. Bin fundraising, anyone?)



For fruits and veggies, I buy local whenever possible. It's too bad the bumper crop of August and September can't be with us year-round, but I enjoy making dishes with local root vegetables all through the winter months. Spring brings local goodies that brighten the table. Did you know



that asparagus, both cooked and raw, is great for kidney cleansing?

Karma's meat, egg, and cheese selection contributes to sustainability by supporting local farmers and cheese makers. You can also find vegan substitutes in the fridges that will lighten your carbon footprint on the planet.

Laura Coramai is a practising homeopath.



Photos by Joanna Wojewoda

Almond milk and bee health

by Martyna Krezel

This winter, a Karma member approached the Food Issues Committee with a concern about the connection between the almond milk industry and bee decline. Since Karma carries two different brands of almond milk — Blue Diamond, which is conventional, and Pacific Foods, which is organic — it's worthwhile to consider whether buying one over the other makes a difference. Both milks are sold at similar price points.

Here's a quick background on the almond industry. The vast majority of the world's almonds are produced in California (over 80 per cent, according to the Almond Board of California). In the 2012–13 crop year, California produced 1.88 billion pounds (850 million kg) of almonds, almost 70 per cent of which were exported, contributing \$11 billion (US) to the state's gross domestic product. It takes 800,000 acres (320,000 hectares) of land to grow all those almond trees, all of which must be pollinated by bees — 1.6 million bee colonies. The bees are vital to the success of the industry, which is why it's all the more troubling that the very practices of conventional almond farmers could be contributing to bee decline. How is this so?

When spraying trees, conventional almond farmers use a mix of pesticides and additives called adjuvants. Adjuvants ensure that the pesticides coat the almond leaves evenly, thus making the spray more effective. In recent years, we have seen improved adjuvants hitting the market that allow the pesticide to not only coat the leaves but actually penetrate them, thus preventing the pesticide

from getting washed away.

Adjuvants are considered inert by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and are therefore not subject to regulation the way pesticides are. However, a 2012 study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* showed that the new-and-improved adjuvants may be contributing to a decline in bee health by giving the pesticides a pathway inside the bee. Tank mixing of pesticides and adjuvants (the practice of mixing many pesticides and adjuvants together) is suspected to be the major reason behind the 2014 bee die-off, when 80,000 bee colonies were either destroyed or damaged after almond farm pollination.

So does buying organic rather than conventional almond milk make a difference? Well, if we're concerned about bee health (and we should be: a third of our food comes to us courtesy of bees and other pollinators, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council), buying organic is the way to go, since organic almond farmers don't use the kind of synthetic pesticides and adjuvants that conventional farmers do. (It's important to note, however, that the issue of

bee decline is complex and there are many more hypothesized causes than adjuvants alone.)

If you have any concerns or questions regarding any of the products carried at Karma, please reach out to the Food Issues Committee at foodissues@karmacoop.org.

Martyna Krezel is the new chair of the Food Issues Committee.



Bee in almond flower



Hello, honeybees

by Sybille Parry

You may have noticed a new lip balm on Karma's shelves in recent months: Toronto Honeys, made by Karma members Shawn Caza and Melissa Berney and their industrious bees. Shawn and Melissa sat down with The Chronicle over email to tell us more about their local hives.

Describe your company and your product in a nutshell.

We are bicycle-powered urban Toronto beekeepers. Our hives are located at Fort York and at the Amsterdam Brewery (on the roof!). We use only natural, organic methods and make our own specially designed cedar hives.

Our eco-friendly lip balm is made with the most ethical ingredients we can find. Our tubes are 100 per cent recycled BPA-free plastic, and we use organic Ontario sunflower oil sourced from Karma, and fair-trade, wild-crafted cacao butter from fellow Karma member Tracey TieF's Annares shop.

How did you first become interested in bees?

Shawn: Six years ago, I was afraid of bees but loved honey and beeswax. I was also interested in local food. Through the community gardens at FoodShare, I met members of the Toronto Beekeepers Co-operative, tasted their honey, and decided to overcome my fears and join them. Learning about bees and their behaviour was fascinating, and I've been enamoured with them ever since.

Melissa: In 2008, I did an internship at the Ignatius CSA Farm in Guelph. They had a great beekeeping



program on the property, and we had a few workshops with them. A while later, I met Shawn and learned of the beekeepers co-op and joined.

What are some of the challenges involved in beekeeping?

There's a good mix of anticipation, planning, and preparation contrasted with on-the-spot decision-making. It's best to disturb the bees as little as possible, so we try to work with them only when we think it will be most useful.

Managing population growth is key to us as small-scale urban beekeepers. We want to maintain colony numbers at a level where we have the time to give them proper attention, and populations are within the carrying capacity of the area. We want to allow reproduction to take place in a way that does not negatively impact our neighbours (that is, by reducing swarming).

Note to the curious: "swarming" refers to the bee colony's way of reproducing, typically in mid-summer. When a colony is doing well, it becomes crowded, so the bees turn selected eggs into young queens. Then the old queen leaves with a swarm of bees (comprising about half the original colony). They just





more severely affected by neonicotinoids (systemic pesticides) than other provinces. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has been pretty good at investigating a rising number of poisoning incidents since 2012. This led to a proposal to apply more stringent restrictions on the use of this type of pesticide. While beekeepers like us might prefer a full ban, the chemical corporations and grain growers are pushing back against the proposal. We should find out what the new regulations will look like by July 1.

“swarm” off, when the time is right, to make a new hive. Contrary to popular opinion, honeybees are not aggressive when they swarm. They fill up on honey before they go and are actually at their most docile. However, when people see a swarm of bees, it’s naturally a scary sight.

What’s the best thing about keeping bees?

It’s allowed us to connect with the city in new ways. Things like getting to know our site hosts and some of the local gardeners, but also trying to see the city through the eyes of a whole other species. We’re much more keenly aware of when and where flowers are blooming, what the wind is like in different areas, and where water accumulates. We also like the diversity of offshoot activities that go hand in hand with the job. Everything from woodworking, to biology, to promoting environmental awareness seems to come up.

Bees have been in the news lately.

What’s happening?

It’s a critical moment for beekeepers in Ontario right now. Though pollinator health is an issue nationwide, the Ontario bee industry has been

How can Karma members support your work?

The best way to support us is to support a healthy environment for bees. By supporting small-scale, local, and organic farmers, you support an agricultural model that is healthier for bees. You support bees when you buy wild local blueberries instead of those imported from the east coast with pollination by imported honeybees, and when you avoid products like non-organic almonds that rely heavily on migrational honeybees for pollination.

If you can, please plant pollinator-friendly flowers and bushes, such as goldenrod, catmint, and anise hyssop; herbs like thyme, oregano, and borage; and trees such as lindens, willow, and black locust. Also, check that seedlings have not been treated with neonicotinoids (yes, they are treating ornamentals as well as corn and soy!).

Melissa has also been passionate on the education front. She gives introductory beekeeping workshops at schools and events.

Photos courtesy of Shawn Caza

Wining and dining, direct from Niagara

by Ann Benedek



Members and staff raised a glass or two at Karma Co-op's pre-holiday wine-tasting event last November. Southbrook Vineyards offered a variety of palate pleasers, the youngest from 2013 and the oldest from 2007, grouped under names as yummy as the wines themselves: Triomphe, Poetica, Connect, Whimsy!

Tasters enjoyed a variety of red and white vintages and placed their orders for delivery and pick-up at Karma. The co-op received a 10 per cent commission on sales from Southbrook.

Southbrook's marketing manager Paul DeCampo, who is also a Karma member, provided oenophiles

with tips on what to serve with what. "You don't want to do a red wine and oysters together," he laughed. Is it true that ideal matches can elevate both food and beverages? "Generally, it will be okay if everything is what you like," he said. "It may not be ideal, but it will be a pleasant experience."

While some tasters continued to sip from Southbrook's delicious selection, others — wine glass in hand — chewed happily on Canadian peameal bacon cooked up by Mario Pingue of Niagara Food Specialties, who was also at the store that day for a demo. I asked Paul to suggest a wine-and-pork combo. “With cured pork, I like white wine,” he offered, “and our Connect organic white is a good choice. The slight sweetness in the wine balances the salt, and the acidity cuts the fat well.”

Southbrook enjoys the distinction of being one of Canada's greenest wineries, and the Niagara-on-the-Lake vineyard has won numerous awards. Could its continued success have anything to do with how the grapes are cultivated? Definitely. The entire 150-acre property is certified organic — a journey that began in 2005 on 75 acres — which means no synthetic pesticides, no chemical fertilizer, no bioengineering, and no genetic modification. In 2008, it became the first winery in Canada to achieve both organic and biodynamic certification for its vineyard. As well, Paul added, the vineyard encourages biodiversity by raising sheep that graze on the cover crop and fertilize the vineyard, and “hosting beehives that produce honey available at the retail store.”

Those sampling the Canadian peameal bacon along with their wine also learned a few pork-related facts. Did you know that the older the animal, the better the taste? Commodity pork is usually brought to market at four or five months of age,

but pork used by Niagara Food Specialties is 10 to 12 months old. “When the animals are older, this affects the quality and taste of the meat,” Mario commented.

The family-owned business uses third-party-certified hogs supplied by southern Ontario farmers. “They're raised with no antibiotics, no growth hormones, and are all vegetarian fed,” Mario said, adding that the animals are humanely treated from “farrow to finish.” As well, the meat is preserved with sea salt and air dried, so it's “nitrate- and chemical-free, as well as gluten- and lactose-free.”

What about a favourite pork recipe? “One of my favourites is bucatini pasta all'amatriciana,” Mario offered. The recipe features guanciale — cured pork jowl. “The guanciale provides a rich backdrop for the sweetness that onions provide in the mirepoix (sauce),

which is juxtaposed to the crazy hotness I create with chilies and black pepper.”

And the wine? Mario suggested a “white wine that is crisp” with a pronounced acidity and “some aromatics.” Alternatively, “a lighter-bodied red with a delicate tannin” also works, he said.

Want to try this recipe? Go to www.pingueprosciutto.com and click on “recipes.” To discover more about Southbrook Vineyards, visit www.southbrook.com. And good news for wine lovers: Southbrook will be back at the co-op later this spring. Watch Karma's website for more information.



Meet your matcha

by Linda Gaylard

You've seen it served up, latte form, in cafés and proclaimed in magazine articles as one of the major food trends of 2015. Now it's here on Karma's shelves: matcha, the super-charged tea! Seems like a lot of fuss for a beverage that has been around for 1,000 years.

Originating in Japan, matcha means "powdered tea." It starts out as a tea leaf similar to other Japanese green teas, but during the final few weeks before harvest, the plants are shaded to stimulate chlorophyll production. The leaves are then plucked, steamed, and dried. The stems and veins are removed, and the leaves, called tencha, are then ground between two granite plates in a matcha grinder. After several hours, a fine, vibrant green powder emerges, the consistency of talc.

There are different grades and types of matcha depending on where in Japan the tea is grown and how it is processed. Ceremonial grade consists of two categories: koicha for making thick tea in formal presentations and usucha for everyday preparation of thin tea.

At Karma, we carry what's known as culinary or confection-grade matcha. This popular grade is a fraction of the price of a ceremonial matcha and is not meant for formalities. It is, however, the type of matcha to have fun with — you can bake with it, create delicious smoothies, whip up coconut-cream matcha lattes, and more.

Our matcha is direct-sourced by Two Hills Tea in Vancouver. It is organically grown and made in Anhui province, China, by a small producer using the Japanese Yabukita cultivar and traditional



Japanese methods. Two Hills Tea has all their teas independently tested for pesticides and heavy metals before putting them on the market.

The health benefits of matcha are multiplied by the fact that we are ingesting the whole leaf, unlike other teas, which are infused. We get the increased benefit of antioxidants such as epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), a potent catechin that sets to work repairing damaged DNA. L-theanine, an amino acid unique to tea, stimulates the production of alpha waves in the brain and gives us a sense of calm. In conjunction with caffeine, the effect is restorative, increasing mental acuity.

So now that we have this trusted source of inexpensive and fresh matcha, make a point of seeking it out. Two Hills Tea matcha lives near the bulk tea display. You can use it plain, although it tastes less sweet than the higher grades. I like to whisk $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon matcha powder with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water at 75°C . I transform it into a latte by whipping in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warmed coconut cream, which also softens the flavour.

I'll be conducting a few matcha workshops at the store, so keep an eye on Karma's website for dates and times.

Linda Gaylard is Karma's resident tea sommelier.

Photo by Joanna Wojewoda



Product spotlight: Explore Asian gluten-free noodles ●●●●●

by Sean Carruthers



Because we avoid wheat at our house, we're always looking for alternatives to the tried-and-true comfort foods ... and let's face it, you can only turn to rice noodles so often before they get boring.

That's why we were excited to see a new assortment of Explore Asian organic pastas made from various types of beans. We took a few bags home from Karma for a trial run.

Not only were the noodles USDA-certified organic, but each of the varieties we tried were also vegan, kosher, and gluten-free, making them a suitable choice for a number of different diets. And because they're made from beans instead of grains, they actually have protein on board instead of straight-up carbs. One thing worth noting: some of the varieties include soy, so if you have soy sensitivities, you'll want to double-check the ingredient list before taking a package home.

First up in our trials was the adzuki bean spaghetti, which is one of the types that also feature soy. After

cooking, the adzuki noodles lose a bit of their reddish colour but remain nice and firm (unlike those unfortunate gluten-free noodles of yore that disintegrated after boiling). Better yet, they don't have that slightly chalky texture like some other bean-based noodles we've tried. In fact, the end result is similar to soba or somen noodles. It wouldn't be a stretch to serve these hot with spaghetti sauce or cold with a more subtle flavouring.

If you're looking for a spaghetti-style noodle without the soy, check out the black bean version, which is strictly black beans and water. Like the adzuki noodles, the texture is similar to soba. However, they're somewhat thinner and shorter right out of the bag, so if you like to spin your spaghetti around your fork while eating, these noodles won't give you as much twirling pleasure.

The last variety in our test kitchen was the edamame and mung bean fettuccine. These noodles come in finger-length strips with a bit of crimp in them, and boil up with a slightly softer texture than the other two, which may be more satisfying for fans of traditional wheat-based noodles.

In addition to the versions we tried, the company's website (www.explore-asian.com) lists a few more varieties that can be special ordered at Karma.

The final verdict: if you're looking for a gluten-free pasta alternative, Explore Asian noodles are definitely worth checking out.

Photo by Sean Carruthers



In the aisle

by Karen Fliess

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Keara Long (member) and Klim Khomenko (friend of Keara)

Occupation: Students at the University of Toronto

Length of Membership: Trial shop in September, joined Karma in November

Status: Working member (cash)



Photo by Karen Fliess

One frigid evening in February, I came upon an adorable young couple who were having so much fun finding and choosing vegetables. Shopping seemed to be a journey from one delightful item to the next. It was captivating to watch them and inspiring to chat with them.

How did you discover Karma?

Keara: I was moving into the Annex, so I did some research about places to shop and found Karma. I have celiac disease, so where I get my food is really important to me. I have slowly moved toward eating organic and even making my own beauty products. I'm detoxifying my life.

Klim: I discovered Karma through Keara.

Why do you shop at Karma?

Keara: A lot of people think shopping organic is really expensive. I bring a lot of people here and like to point out to them that it is pretty much the same price. I can trust that most of what I get here is ethical. I love the lack of packaging and the reusable things under the table for bulk stuff.

Klim: I like the community aspect and the healthy food. I used to work in the produce department at No Frills, and you can tell the difference in the quality of the food, work environment, and customer relations. I can taste the difference in the produce. Also, the healthier you eat, the heavier your shopping bag; nothing is processed, and it's not outrageously expensive. I like the fact that Karma is a co-operative.

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What is in your shopping basket today?

Keara and Klim (each adding items spontaneously as they recalled what was in their rucksacks): We have kale, beets, carrots, garlic, collards, ginger, apples, oranges, zucchini, mushrooms, cabbage, avocados, and broccoli. We also have soup bones and Pacific Coast wild-caught canned salmon.

What is one product you discovered at Karma?

Keara: I've tried some weird vegetables here, like celeriac and Jerusalem artichokes. I like to open the fridge and decide what vegetables would be good to cook together.

Klim: We usually end up smelling the essential oils and chamomile soap and would like to buy some when we have more money.

Is there a product you would recommend to Karma members?

Keara: I love all the vegetables. I just started buying grass-fed beef from the freezer. People shouldn't eat it because I want it all.

Klim: The bulk honey. I also notice a real difference with the grass-fed beef; it is softer and more tender and has a really different taste.

Is there a memorable experience that you have had at Karma?

Keara: We do a divestment camp at U of T and needed to buy food for a retreat we were organizing for 35 people.

Klim: We convinced them to let us buy the food here. The number of people kept changing, and we were concerned we would run out of money.

Are there any next steps that you see for Karma?

Keara: Maybe more social activities. I would like to meet more people here; they would be really interesting people. I find the meat section a bit small. I would like there to be more offal, that goes with using the whole animal. There are liver and bones occasionally, but they run out quickly.

Klim: I like the idea of social gatherings because it fosters community.

What book are you reading right now?

Keara: *The Comeback* by John Ralston Saul.

Klim: *This Changes Everything* by Naomi Klein.

Other than Karma, what else do you think is one of Toronto's little-known gems?

Keara: Almond Butterfly, a gluten-free café on Harbord. They have gluten-free, paleo, and vegan stuff, desserts and meals.

Klim: Wallace & Co., near Lansdowne. It's a café that is like a diner with a long bar with stools, breakfast food, and the freshest orange juice I've ever had.

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience at Karma?

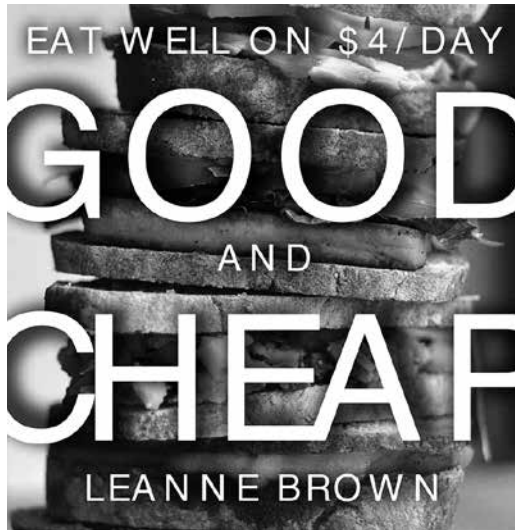
Keara: I say to everyone that you have to come here. I've brought lots of friends and my family. We should be more connected to the food we put in our body. I've been thinking a lot about where food comes from.

Klim: Karma is a great, really cool place. You become closer to the food you are eating. It's so sad to get food from Metro, where it is all in packaging. There is a very different vibe here.



The joy of cooking on a budget

by Barbara Walters



Last summer, I was intrigued by a link in one of my regular newsletters. I had no idea that I was about to participate in a food revolution. Clicking on the link took me to a crowd-funding campaign for *Good and Cheap: Eat Well on \$4/Day*, a cookbook for those living on a low income. Written by Edmonton-born author Leanne Brown, the cookbook was already available for free online, but Brown wanted to print hard copies to ensure that more people would have access to it. For a \$25 pledge, you could buy two books: one for yourself and another that would be donated to someone in need.

Brown began the project during her master's degree in food studies at New York University. She observed that Americans with limited finances eat too much processed food loaded with

carbohydrates. She knew there was a better way to nourish oneself on a tight budget. Her goal, she wrote, was to create a resource to promote “the joy of cooking and show just how delicious and inspiring a cheap meal can be if you cook it yourself.”

Brown's successful Kickstarter campaign raised almost \$145,000, well beyond her initial \$10,000 target. By the end of 2014, she had distributed 9,000 donated copies of the cookbook, and another 24,000 copies were sold at cost to organizations working with low-income families.

I received my beautifully illustrated copy in October. Each recipe includes the cost per serving, which ranges from 35 cents to \$3.50 at the high end. Brown advocates for thinking seasonally and building a pantry of items to have on hand so you'll always be ready to whip up something cheap and nutritious.

Along with recipes for every meal, there is an interesting chapter called “Things on Toast,” with ideas for quick toppings that could just as easily be paired with rice or other grains. My family's favourite dishes so far are the Vegetable Jambalaya (65 cents per serving) and Vegetable Quiche, Hold the Crust (\$1.50 per serving).

To download the free PDF of the cookbook, visit www.leannebrown.com. A second print edition will also be available in bookstores in mid-July. For those who are interested in keeping costs low and flavour and healthiness high, this is a book for you.

Vegetable jambalaya from *Good and Cheap* by Leanne Brown

Makes 6 servings

2 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
3 stalks celery, chopped
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
½ small green chili, finely chopped
2 large tomatoes, chopped
2 bay leaves
1 tsp. paprika
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. cayenne pepper
½ tsp. dried thyme
½ tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. pepper
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce
¾ cup long-grain rice
3 cups vegetable broth or chicken stock

Additions

- slices of fried sausage
- shrimp
- leftover meat, tofu, or beans


Start with the oil in a large high-sided saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion, pepper, and celery, and then cook for about five minutes until they become translucent but not brown.

Add the rest of the ingredients except for the rice and broth. Let everything cook for about one minute to let some of the tomato juice release.

Add the rice and slowly pour in the broth. Reduce the heat to medium and let the dish cook until the rice absorbs all the liquid. It should take about 20 to 25 minutes.

If you're using any of the additions, throw them in at about the 15-minute mark to let them warm up.



Photos by Leanne Brown/Creative Commons 

MISSION STATEMENT

Our aim is to:

- Create a community of actively participating members;
- Foster a healthy connection to the food we eat, the people who grow it, and the other organizations who share our beliefs;
- Co-operatively educate ourselves on environmental issues; and
- Exercise political and economic control over our food *by operating a viable co-operative food store.*

CONTACT YOUR CO-OP GET INVOLVED!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: board@karmacoop.org

BUILDING COMMITTEE: building@karmacoop.org

CHRONICLE COMMITTEE: chronicle@karmacoop.org

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: community@karmacoop.org

FINANCE COMMITTEE: finance@karmacoop.org

FOOD ISSUES COMMITTEE: foodissues@karmacoop.org

MEMBER LABOUR COORDINATOR: mlc@karmacoop.org

ORIENTATION COMMITTEE: orientation@karmacoop.org

SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE: socialevents@karmacoop.org

STORE HOURS:

Monday:	CLOSED
Tuesday:	9 am – 9 pm
Wednesday:	9 am – 9 pm
Thursday:	9 am – 9 pm
Friday:	9 am – 9 pm
Saturday:	10 am – 6 pm
Sunday:	10 am – 6 pm

KARMA STAFF

GENERAL MANAGER: TALIA MCGUIRE (ON MATERNITY LEAVE)

ACTING GENERAL MANAGER: RACHEL YANCHYSHYN

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, PRODUCE MANAGER:
NATHANIEL WILLIAMS

BREAD BUYER, GROCERY BUYER, RETAIL ASSOCIATE, MEMBER
LABOUR COORDINATOR: PAUL DIXON

BULK BUYER, GROCERY BUYER, RETAIL ASSOCIATE: CARA GOLD

GROCERY BUYER, RETAIL ASSOCIATE: KAT CAMFIELD

MEAT BUYER, RETAIL ASSOCIATE: JAMES BYRNE

HEALTH & BEAUTY BUYER, RETAIL ASSOCIATE: LEAH

RETAIL ASSOCIATE: SADIE GOLDSTEIN

BOOKKEEPER: DENISE STAPLETON

MEMBER RECORDS SECRETARY: KIRSTEN HEYERDAHL

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PLANNING CO-SECRETARY, ENGAGEMENT CO-SECRETARY,
ORIENTATION COMMITTEE LIAISON: SAMANTHA HICKS

ENGAGEMENT CO-SECRETARY, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE LIAISON: MELISSA BERNEY

SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE LIAISON : RICK CONROY