

Community Fair Trade Organic

# co-op news

December 2007

newsletter of the Dublin Food Co-op

## Editorial

**W**elcome to the December issue of the Co-op's newsletter. Since the last issue we have had our official opening presided over by Minister for the Environment and member, John Gormley. See inside for a further report on the day - which was a great one. In true Co-op style, alongside all the officials who came out for the day were a few vociferous hecklers who heckled the new minister on certain political points - making for a typically lively event!

We are well settled now in our new home at Newmarket, Dublin 8. As winter makes its' chilly presence felt Co-op business has been getting busier on both Thursday evenings and Saturdays (our flagship business day of course).

We have had some welcome new producer members join the Co-op, read more about them inside. There is news of changes to the Co-ops' Co-ordinating Body, info on the Products Group, news from the office and plenty more!

Wishing you and yours best wishes for this seasonal time of year whatever your religious or non-religious persuasion!

## Co-op Opening Times

Thursday 4 – 8 pm

Saturday 9.30am – 4.30pm

## Xmas Opening Times:

The Co-op will be closed for business on Thurs Dec. 27th and Sat Dec. 29th.

We will reopen again on Saturday 5th January.

## Father Christmas comes to the Co-op!

Bring your little ones to write their Christmas letters and meet Father Christmas and his sparky Chimney Sweep at the Co-op.

All gifts will be eco-friendly. Minimum suggested donation €8. Tell all your friends!



## Opening Day

Saturday October 20th saw a heap of activity at the Co-op. Following weeks of preparation by the Marketing Group, staff and volunteers alike, the big launch day of our new premises had arrived and we welcomed TD's, Councillors and invitees to a cuppa cum photo-session. Minister for the Environment, John Gormley was on hand to do the honours and guests and members were treated to a marvelous and impromptu speech from Mr. Gormley, introduced with his membership number by the current Chairperson, Aodhagán O'Broin.

The Minister admitted he had slipped on turning up for his Help Rota lately, and mused about the pioneering of the early Co-op days, still relevant today. He urged the Co-op to take the lead in community-based co-operative activity around food, health and the environment, combining our small individual powers into a booming voice highlighting issues on GM, food miles, organic production, animal welfare and effects on our planet. Our pioneering work is certainly not done yet, and the new premises combined with a long-term lease offers plenty of opportunities. We look forward to your continued work and ever-needed support as we push onwards.

Finally, a great many thanks to our volunteers, CB members, staff and all those who supported the launch in any way: the place looked fabulous, was filled to the brim with people and produce, giving testimony to the vibrancy and the energy we all have come to enjoy in the Co-op community. Long may it last!

Roeland Van Elsen (Acting Secretary/Co-ordinating Body)

## A Word From The Office About Our Members Database

First of all, I would like to apologize to all the members and to all the welcome desk volunteers who have been inconvenienced by the poor condition of our database.

For quite a while the Co-ordinating Body has felt the database needed to be updated. Organising an AGM has been very awkward - it was difficult to export data from the old database for the invitations, and after every AGM undelivered and returned invitations piled up in the office. It has taken some time to create a new database. In the meantime I have to use an Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was exported shortly before we left North King Street. All new members who joined the Co-op since we moved have been entered on the spreadsheet. Obviously Excel is not software designed for use as a database and it has limited functions for this purpose. But it is the only one which is

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able to correspond with both the old and the new database.

As we all know a database is as good as the data which has been entered into it. I still have to work my way through piles of sheets with notes from the welcome desk, returned survey questionnaires and undelivered mail. Much of this information is handwritten and difficult to read. The data cleansing in general is very time consuming and I have to fit it in on top of all the other duties I have.

In conclusion again I apologize if you are not on the list or if you have been asked to give your address and email repeatedly...

But I would also like to ask for help.

Email me at [info@dublinfoodcoop.com](mailto:info@dublinfoodcoop.com) with "database" in the subject line if:

- your contact details have changed since you have been a member of the Co-op (eg you moved house, got a new phone number, got a new email address)
- you are not on the list at the welcome desk
- there is a gap behind your name on this list which means we don't have your email address

Thank you very much.

Reini (Co-op Administrator)

## It takes a Village

There is a popular saying, "it takes a village to raise a child".

This summer on the lucky morning of the 7th of the 7th of the 7th our son, Oscar, was born. Two weeks early, he raced into the world, speeding through red lights, accompanied by the Berlin police, who changed the direction of the central lane of the motorway and viewed it all as a great film-style car chase game.

We were not here when the Co-op moved but two months after his birth Oscar was welcomed down the ramp into the 'Food Co-op' by so many members in this wonderful new home, as impossible to imagine months earlier when I stood looking at the mess and wondered, "how is it all going to be possible"? as imagining parenthood at that time.

Oscar has been welcomed in so many ways: he has been romped and chatted to, giggled with, sung to, he has traveled new musical landscapes in the Co-op - thanks Anto! - and been given deep life advice.

When a baby is born, parents, too, are born and the support they are given is a vital thing. We would like to thank you for all the help, advice and encouragement, but most of all, for being our village in the city.

Now we get to do it all again for Dennis Healy's baby, Aisling, and Siraj's new son and Ziman's little brother - WELCOME little ones!

Catherine Fitzgerald (Co-op Member)

## Heroes of the Soup Kitchen

There is an unofficial Soup Competition on the go!

You might have wondered at the variety of soups at the Co-op every Saturday, but you may not be aware that all the soup at the Co-op Café is being made by heroic Co-op members. This is another by-members-for-members initiative, and some of our soup-chefs (rather than sous-chefs) have used their day to invite friends into the Co-op to taste their cuisine.

Soup is made with organic ingredients and from Co-op dry-goods and producer members' vegetables. It must be vegetarian; it is usually seasonal, and often made with sponsored ingredients, thanks to our generous producer members.

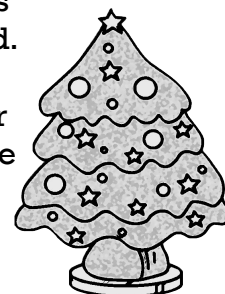
All the profits from the Co-op café go towards the running of the co-op. Our current goal is to purchase a dishwasher. If you have a heroic soup in you and would like to share it, look at the dates vacant on the rota posted inside the kitchen wall, and sign-up. Then all you have to do is make the soup!

Well done all the Soup Heroes thus far, and many thanks to May for serving it.

Organisers: May at the Co-op café, Anne Byrne (CB member), Catherine FitzGerald (ordinary member).

### Buy your tree at the Co-op!

Another first at the Co-op: Christmas trees are available at Robin's Christmas stand. If you would like a non-shed, Co-op tree, please place your order this week; supply is very limited. Robin is selling wreaths to raise money to do volunteer work in Ecuador. 50% of the profit margin from the trees goes to the Co-op, 50% to Robin's Ecuador fund.



## New Stalls at the Co-op

Keep your eyes peeled for the excellent new stalls which have been opening up at the Co-op recently. Among the newest of them is The Artisan Pizza Company run by Gianpiero De Vallier and Cliona Swan.

The pizza bases are made "using a traditional Italian method of pizza making", says Cliona. "You leave the dough to raise over two days, so you use less yeast and the pizzas are more digestible and tastier".

The frozen bases are sold separately in packs of three with instructions on how to be your own pizza chef included. It's also possible to buy ready made pizzas whole or by the slice with a range of pizza toppings to choose from. The Artisan Pizza Company has its own portable stone base pizza ovens so the cooked pizzas have the added flavour of stone baking.

Gianpiero, originally from Italy but living in Ireland for the past five years, has been a baker for almost two decades now. Cliona

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is a secondary school teacher and the couple run their business, barely a month old, from the SPADE Enterprise Centre in Stoneybatter.

Another new Co-op stall holder who moved from the glorious warmth of the Mediterranean to share the secrets of traditional cooking, is Katerina Psimpopoulos.

Katerina has been running a stall specialising in Greek cookery for the past few weeks. "Typically with a Greek meal there will be three salads accompanying the main course", she says. "The salads are made using entirely raw vegetables and a combination of cooked and raw. Some salads will incorporate cooked legumes, pasta or rice. I am selling salads based on authentic recipes which you won't find in most Greek cookery books, using traditional recipes from the islands". At the moment Katerina is offering six different salads, two entirely raw and four cooked.

Originally from Thessaloniki in Northern Greece, she moved to Ireland just over a year ago and claims to find the weather here "refreshing"!

"Sometimes opposites attract", she says, "and I have had lots of sun in my life so I can appreciate the rain".

An early childhood psychologist by profession, she has set up shop at the Co-op to share her love of fresh Greek cookery and to support her passion for organic growing. Look out for traditional Greek Christmas treats at her stall in the coming weeks.

## **Co-ordinating Body (CB) changes**

Over the last few months a few of our hardworking CB members resigned from their duties for a variety of reasons. There is no doubt that the move to our new premises and ongoing need for financial controls dramatically affected our financial situation. We also unfortunately lost our manager.

Clearly the workload for the CB has increased exponentially, and literally all work and questions come to us, creating difficulties in terms of priorities, deadlines and pressures.

There's no denying it is challenging, but it is an exciting time to take on what is also quite stimulating work and the CB are actively looking for new members. There are four vacancies with the possibility to co-opt a candidate immediately on approval of a quorate CB. If you are interested, contact us at [info@dublinfoodcoop.com](mailto:info@dublinfoodcoop.com) or ring the office at 01 4544258.

## **The Products & Services Group**

The Products Group was set up by the Dublin Food Co-op members at the 2007 AGM to look at all products and services provided to Co-op members.

One of our aims is to look critically at the price and quality of the products on our shelves. Members have been very helpful with their experience in relation to products.

The product group is currently researching all methods of price reduction. You will find some new products on our shelves

ordered on a trial basis, including poppy seeds at half the price of the co-op brand - see if you can spot the others!

### **Sponsorship**

The products group made a proposal to the CB for a new Product Sponsor-Producer-Member. Under this scheme a producer member would provide a service or product to the members that is not provided by the Dublin Food Co-op. A Product Sponsor sponsors this service or product

The Products Group and Co-op staff endeavour to support new products, taking an active interest in selling them.

The new Burt's Bees products are the first products purchased under the product sponsorship scheme. They are selling very well.

### **Buying Clubs**

If you have a yen to have a particular item and you would like to have it cheaper than usual, the products group will consider all your suggestions for a buying club. A buying club is set up for each approved product.

To get in touch with the Products Group in relation to the Product Sponsorship or the Buying Club please contact the members of the Product Group:

Joseph Dunne, Morag Friel, Cecilia Ramondetta, Arvid Akerland or Catherine FitzGerald or email; [greinefraoch@hotmail.com](mailto:greinefraoch@hotmail.com), [cato9tales@dublin.ie](mailto:cato9tales@dublin.ie)

See next newsletter for more information on Buying Clubs and Sponsorship Schemes

## **Co-op Walks**

### **December Walk**

**Where:** North Bull Island off the coast of Dublin's northside at Clontarf/Sutton. This is a low lying island connected to the mainland by bridge and causeway which is also a International Biosphere Nature Reserve. Home to thousands of birds including Geese, Ducks, Waders and Birds of Prey.

**When:** Sunday 30th December.

**Meet:** At the middle of the causeway at 11am. There is parking along the causeway and we will gather there so you cant miss us. The 130 bus, whose terminus is in Lower Abbey Street, goes to St. Annes Park, 10 minutes walk from the causeway and Raheny Dart Station is only 15 minutes walk away.

### **January Walk**

**Where:** St. Kevins Way, Tonlegee and Glendalough. This walk follows along part of St. Kevins Way, an ancient pilgrimage route, as well as climbing some of the mountains near Glendalough.

**When:** Sunday 27th January 2008.

**Meet:** At Lynams Hotel, Laragh village, at 11am

For all walks bring comfortable footwear, warm and waterproof clothes and some food. For more info. or if you need a lift contact Larry Gordon at 087-6832827(Mobile).

## Help Rota Discussions/Changes

There has been much discussion between the Co-op's Operations Staff, CB and Help Rota members on how to improve the Help Rota and volunteering structure in the Co-op which at present could use a good kick-start.

First off is the need to dispel the myth that since we have moved to our own premises we need less volunteers [due to not having to move everything every week]. We actually need a lot more volunteers as there is much more stuff to do eg: building maintenance type work or toilet cleaning which we didn't have any responsibility for or authority over in St. Andrews Centre.



It is the opinion of this writer that in the spirit of true decentralised collectivisation the help rota and other sub groups should be self-organising and self-managed. For example: The Help/Info Desk groups which have been in operation for many years could meet up every so often to reorganise themselves for times when there is low attendance and to arrange swaps, rather

than rely on a staff member to oversee this. Likewise the Meitheal group, Products Group, Toilet Cleaning rota etc. would organize themselves, reporting to the CB and Operations Staff where needs be but also with a high level of their own autonomy.

At present there have been numerous ways discussed to try to increase the level of volunteer time available to the Co-op. While there is no final plan on the table, it has been decided to reduce the seven help rota teams to five.

It works like this: if you were previously on teams F and G you are now on team D, team D stays as is and gains some extra members which it has recently been lacking.

This is a short term measure which is designed to primarily counter the fact that some of the Help Rota teams are consistently lacking; which can be a major strain on the small team of paid Operations Staff employed by the Co-op (mostly on a part-time basis). This measure would help to ensure the system runs more smoothly and that both members and producers alike enjoy their contact with the Co-op - support for the staff from members is essential. It will also hopefully provoke discussion between help rota members, info/help desk teams how the system can be improved with their active input (which is needed).

The work of the volunteers also helps to free up paid staff to take on some of the more complex tasks.

Working on the Help Rota can be a bit of craic, and it's a nice way to get to know other Co-op members. The Core Help Rota consists of people who are responsible for such tasks as shelf stacking, checking in goods and invoices, stock-takes, floor sweeping, general getting the Co-op ready for business on Thursdays and Saturdays.

The Help/Info Desk Rota (which has suffered particular attrition rates since the move from Pearse St.) is responsible for signing in Co-op members, explaining to visitors how the Co-op works and signing up new members. These volunteers also help create a sense of community and security during opening hours. The Help/Info Desk only runs on Saturdays at the moment, due to lack of members. But ideally with a few more volunteers on board the Help/Info Desk will open on Thursdays also.

Any member that volunteers on a Help Rota team receives a 10% discount on Co-op goods. In the near future it is likely that this system will be adjusted to a credit system which acknowledges the actual hours that volunteers work.

Anyone interested in joining please contact Anto, Pauric or Tim.

A healthy functioning 'Food Co-op needs the active involvement of members whose interests the Co-op is to represent.

Anto Dillon (Operations Staff Help Rota Co-ordinator)

### Dates remainder 2007

E	F	G
8 Dec	13-15 Dec	20-22 Dec

### Dates early 2008

A	B	C	D	E
3-5 Jan	10-12 Jan	17-19 Jan	24-26 Jan	31 Jan- 2 Feb
7-9 Feb	14-16 Feb	21-23 Feb	28 Feb- 1 Mar	6-8 March

Note teams D, F and G combine into D. Please check back at the Info desk for full 2008 calendar.

**Please note extra Help Rota volunteers needed on Sat 22nd Dec. Close Down for assistance with final stocktake of the year.**

## Co-op News Team

Anthony Dillon (layout/acting editor), Jackie Bourke (reporting/editing/proofing) Thanks to Catherine Fitzgerald, Roeland Van Elsen and Edwin Wymer for their input

The Co-op News is looking for a new helpers any budding journalists out there looking for experience, or non-journalists with an interest in communication get in touch to: editor@dublinfoodcoop.com

Any articles, letters, opinion pieces for inclusion in next newssheet should be forwarded to the same address.