

UNICORN'S — NEWS —

CELEBRATING 21 YEARS OF GREAT GROCERIES

Happy twenty-first birthday to us! And a warm welcome to our annual round up, a chance to find out more about what happens on the shop floor, behind the scenes and beyond all those tasty ingredients.

Whether tasty food, wholesome food or food justice is your passion (maybe it's the whole shebang) you should find something you'll enjoy reading.

We have a lot of pieces that go beyond the shop floor, from our buyers' visit to Biofach - the Organic Trade fair in Germany, to our Grow a Grocery support, to looking at where we invest our money and who we choose to donate to - 'Turning Sales into Solidarity' (p11).

We also cover some global issues that impact on how we trade. On p7 we explore the alarming fact that six companies now control 61% of the world's commercial seed sales and 63% of pesticide sales - a fact that makes our investment in the Seed Co-operative (p6) feel quite timely. Unicorn member Laura gives a snapshot of the worker co-op movement in her home country of Argentina on p10, this echoes a common theme of co-ops emerging as a solution to political and economic problems.

We should probably mention Brexit and its impact. There has been a great deal of commercial and economic uncertainty over the last year. That certainly won't be news to any of you and like most

UK businesses we are keenly aware of the current and potential impact to trade and supply lines. For instance, the weak pound has an immediate impact on direct trade with Europe, and changes to employment status for European workers in the UK is a worrying factor for many of our growers, a fragile business for many of them at the best of times. Growers are concerned about how they will harvest their crops without this labour source, an additional variable they could do without.

There is also the expected strain on the physical border at the Channel Tunnel. The tunnel's infrastructure is designed for swift transportation of goods and vehicles between the UK and Europe, not for the kind of import controls that Brexit is likely to bring. Hold ups cost money (£500 a day at the tunnel for a chilled lorry), money that will either be passed to the consumer or the importer. The UK imports 21% of its fresh fruit & veg from Europe via the tunnel.

There are lots of reports already about food shortages and price increases, and a recent British Retail Consortium report warns the impact will be most severe for perishable fresh produce. Maybe a



positive outcome will be a greater focus on UK seasonality and a bigger push to increase UK production? How much of any increase in costs will be passed onto the consumer, against the backdrop of raging competition of the discounters and the Amazon takeover of Wholefoods, is yet to be seen. We are just hoping it's not the growers who will (again) feel a disproportionate part of the pain. We will keep you updated about the impact on our offer with our weekly veg update (written by our veg buyers who deal direct with the growers), instore and on our website. See p5 for some veg news too; find out about frost-lick and robots on farms! On the same page you can read about the dedication of our veg team with a write up of their annual chip night. You will be happy to hear they take their spuds very seriously.

Those of you who follow us on social media may know that we've been building a brand new Unicorn website over the summer. Here's a snapshot of the front page. It will be unveiled and live by the end of October. As well as all the store info, product stories and co-op to co-op support from our old site, it will feature an easy-to-use recipe finder with lots of our deli recipes for you to recreate (previewed on the back page). It will also enable you to buy Unicorn gift vouchers online!

Finally, for those of you who have shopped with us for a long time you may enjoy the trip down memory lane (centre pages). Thanks for a wonderful 21 years, we look forward to the next.



CHORLTON'S CHANGING

Chorlton is likely to be undergoing some really big changes over the next few years, with major redevelopment planned for three spaces.

Chorlton Precinct

Re-development plans for the precinct were abandoned in 2009 when recession hit, but its owners now plan a major 'mixed-use' transformation, which includes adding 190 homes, covered parking, 'activating' the part of the site that bounds Manchester Road and creating a new residential street with townhouses through the site from Wilbraham Road.

Ryebank Road playing fields

This open space (owned by Manchester Metropolitan University) neighbours Longford Park. The draft plans for 70 'high quality executive homes' may reignite a clash with nearby residents, many of whom have long fought to prevent the sale of the site.

Chorlton Leisure Centre

Currently vacant, the centre next door to Unicorn is listed as Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act 2011. This means that the two community groups who registered an interest in buying the site in July have a six month period (ending in December) to submit a bid to the council.

One of these is the 'Friends of Chorlton Baths' group, who hope to bring local residents together to explore the possibility of purchasing the site from the council. Their aim is to retain the Baths site for some kind of community use and they plan to investigate all the options, including re-opening it as a leisure centre. They are keen to hear from people who might be able to offer practical help or financial support, particularly anyone with

expertise in fundraising, business planning, the leisure industry and construction. With or without those skills though, if you're enthusiastic, do get in touch - you could be just the person FOCB need.

To find out more about their activities email Save@ChorltonBaths.org or ring the group's chair on 07887 733 167.

As far as we know, the second group hasn't yet made their plans public, so we are excited and very intrigued to know what this might involve!

As next-door neighbours we obviously have a pretty significant interest in the site ourselves, and have talked to the council in partnership with Southway Housing Association about expanding onto the site with a mixed use retail/housing development. However we'd be delighted to see the building re-open as a leisure centre or community space if it's at all possible, for lots of reasons (including that it was really handy being able to pop in there at lunchtime or after work!). We wish the community groups loads of luck as they work over the next few months to come up with a financially viable plan.

USE YOUR VOICE:

Together, the proposals could change Chorlton quite profoundly and are already generating strong feelings, especially around parking, affordable housing, public service provision, and retaining reasonably priced shop units for existing retailers and small independents.

Although the details haven't yet been made public, a major consultation is on the agenda for this Autumn. It's likely to take the form of public drop-in sessions plus online and paper surveys, and will inform the developers' thinking as they work towards submitting formal planning applications for the two sites. Keep an eye out in the local press, follow @MCC on twitter, and we will also publicise details in the shop and online as soon as we know anything.

However you feel about the various proposals, make sure you don't miss out on this opportunity to inform Chorlton's future.

Artist's impression of proposed new street from Wilbraham Road to rear of shopping precinct

CHIPS AHOY

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CHIPPING SPUD (YOU CAN'T SAY WE'RE NOT DEDICATED)

Unicorn's inaugural Chip Night was held on a dark winter's night. Stuart, long-time potato enthusiast was the Master of Ceremonies. Eight varieties of potato vied for the crown of Chip of the Year; what follows is a brief summary of the tastes, smells and sensations which the diners noted during the 90 minute celebration of the Chip.

British Queen

The British Queen, regal by name but not by taste, was roundly criticised for its heavy, excessively floury texture which kept hold of a bit too much grease for these diners. Stu had the last word as he left for the kitchen "not a chip." An abrupt start.

Desiree

The Desiree, an oft-maligned potato, was felt to be "more of a Roastie" thanks to its crumbly-ness but provided ample sustenance whilst being a bit dry. But definitely more of a chip than the BQ.

Marfona

The Marfona arrived looking to eschew its reputation for being a reliable all-rounder. Positive murmurs wafted down the table as the chip tray followed; definitely the best one so far - its balance of texture between the skin and inside was noteable. But would it go the distance?

Carolus

The competition had duly started, we were now ravenous, our mouths salivating, our vocabulary stretched. There are only so many ways to describe a chip, but we were fearless. The Carolus was a stunner. "Good texture" someone said. "Held its crispiness" said another. Suggestions were that it would make an excellent French Fry. It had the most flavour, and took an early lead.

Purple Velvet

Stu provided us with a surprise at this point. Keen to show off the Chip World's diversity, a Purple chip was produced. Who knew?! Quite moist, soft, but a bit dense and no crisping. The tray was the first not to be finished. It would be memorable, but received no votes.

Estima

Bellies were becoming stretched, our stomachs catching up with our brains but never a hint of defeat. It was during this batch that most of us passed the 50 chip mark, outstanding. Creamy but without crisp, the Estima was light and sweet. Good taste, but not a chipper. A crowd-pleasing effort nevertheless.

Kestrel

The big-names kept coming and they were producing the goods. The Kestrel chip brought obscenities from one end of the table... in a good way. Moist, light and floury but firm. All the adjectives you look for in a chip.

Bluebelle

Stomachs ready to burst, mutters of discontent, cries of "I can't eat any more chips", we were at the last chip. The Bluebelle. A name so pretty your mouth waters on its hearing. By now Stu was in full chipping mode, reaching levels of frying no man or woman had reached since the late 70s. The peas were run down, the ketchup was scarce, curry sauce had long been finished. It was only chips. Thoughts had turned to the journey home and how we would all feel after everything had been said and done and eaten. But the Bluebelle wrenched our minds back to the present, wow, WHAT A CHIP. Hot, light and airy. Against the odds, the Bluebelle delivered on texture and crisping. It was likened to a classic British Chip Shop Chip, no finer compliment surely? A fitting climax to a splendid evening.

Decisions

As is evident from the tight result, there is no clear winner for Chip of the Year, it was a two-horse race between two excellent potatoes. All potatoes gave their best, as did all the chefs, participants and condiments.

THE RESULTS

Each person was given 2 votes to cast between the 8 chips. The results were as follows:

- 1st - Carolus (11)
- 2nd - Bluebelle (10)
- 3rd - Kestrel (6)
- 4th - British Queen & Marfona (4)
- 5th - Estima (2)
- 6th - Desiree (1)
- 7th - Purple Velvet (0)





As we move from August into September, summer crops still dominate the veg range, but there is more than a hint of Autumn creeping across the display.

This is particularly evident when looking at squashes and pumpkins. In late July & August, soft-skinned summer varieties prevailed. These are often courgette-like in taste and texture – ideal for soaking up other flavours. As the season progresses, and main crop varieties ripen off in the sunshine (yes, there has been some), we're beginning to see deeper/sweeter flavours develop. Harder baked/cured skins may not be so edible, but they're ideal for longer term storage. Local grower Alan Hewitt over at Dunham Massey has been growing squashes & pumpkins for over thirty years, and is confident his Uchiki Kuri crop this year is his best ever! This ties in with our own taste experiences of earlier varieties from Ormskirk's Duncan Gielty, and Pam Bowers from Strawberry Fields in Lincolnshire.

Pam & Duncan, along with Martin Soble from Carey near Hereford, also anticipate a healthy sweetcorn season. Indeed, it kicked in a good fortnight earlier than 2016, and all being well should run deep into October as growers move through sowings of different varieties, and the season progresses northwards.

Being as we keep name checking her, those interested in the challenges – and indeed the rewards, of commercial organic growing, could do a lot worse than following Pam Bowers' Twitter feed. One recent highlight for @Organic_pam was the arrival of her new laser-guided robotic weeding machine. Largely thanks to a successful European

Agricultural Fund bid, it will massively increase efficiencies on Pam's Lincolnshire farm. It also serves as a timely reminder of uncertainties for British growers in a post-Brexit world.

Autumn is always an exciting time for apples in Unicorn. Early season varieties such as Discovery, James Grieve, and Scrumptious have been on our shelves for a good few weeks now. Anticipate the range increasing massively though as we move towards its peak in late October, a time when we always celebrate this diversity with Apple Day. Off

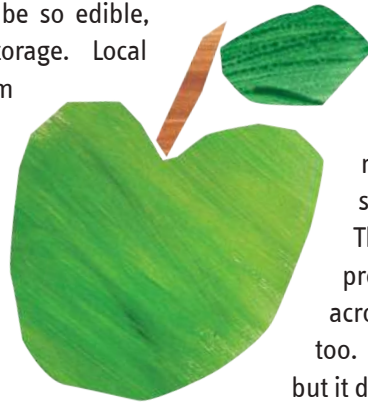
the back of a bumper 2016 crop however, the picture from growers is quite mixed this season.

Harsh frosts in late April, with many apple trees still in blossom, has resulted in certain varieties from some growers yielding no fruit at all.

This appears to have been particularly pronounced in the southeast, but also across many parts of mainland Europe too. Other growers are more optimistic, but it does seem likely that the skin finish on

many varieties might not be so clean as in some years... expect to hear lots of information about frost-lick in forthcoming editions of the veg news!

Locally, August 22nd was an exciting day in the life of Glebelands City Growers. After a two-year long conversion period on their new growing space at Stockport, their Woodbank Park site is now certified as fully organic! Anyone who's been enjoying spring onions, rocket and pea shoots through the Summer months has already been reaping the rewards of their expanded operation. We look forward to a late flush of tomatoes, and a less limited midwinter salad selection, courtesy of the newly expanded (4-strong) Glebelands team and their new(ish) site!



FC United..

..are a community football club now enjoying a permanent home in Moston, North Manchester, after 10 years of ground sharing. Set up in 2005 in protest at the Glazer family's purchase of Manchester United, the club is entirely fan-owned and run and is registered as a "Community Benefit Society" with a one member, one vote format. Written into the club's manifesto are community engagement, remaining affordable, being open to all and remaining not-for-profit.



Currently playing in the 6th tier of English football, their off-field exploits are to be heralded too, with FCUM being the first English club to pay all of its staff the national living wage. It also runs community initiatives from the breakfast club for local residents, food bank for Manchester's homeless (as well as opening their doors on Christmas day for hot food and showers!) and a collection for refugees to be sent to Calais.

Unicorn currently has £2,000 invested in community shares and £10,000 in loanstock, as well as recently purchasing 2 season tickets that will be donated for use by a local charity.

Stretford Public Hall..

.. is a community benefit society, democratically run by its local members on a one-member one-vote basis. It was formed in 2015 to take on the ownership and running of the history-rich building and make it a unique and thriving multi-purpose venue at the heart of Stretford. The society was looking to raise £200,000 by the end of March to fund the transformation of its inspirational Victorian ballroom, allowing it to host all manner of cultural and community events and generate sufficient income to run the Hall sustainably. We invested £5,000, joining almost 800 others, who collectively pushed the Friends group well past their target. They're now busy working on plans for the transformation, expected to be underway before the end of the year.



Seed Co-operative..

..exists to increase the diversity of vegetable varieties that are available, with a focus on taste, texture, nutrition, keeping qualities, and suitability to UK organic growing.

In March 2017 we made the decision to become a member of the co-operative and purchased £1000 of shares. Based in Spalding, Lincolnshire, the



organisation purchased the 24 acre Gosberton Bank Nursery last year to grow new varieties of biodynamic and organic vegetable, herb and flower seeds and to process, test and market seed grown by co-operative members.



We have been able to invest some of our reserves in enterprises that need a capital boost to get established. It's a form of social investment – one with a social or environmental outcome. Here are some of the interesting organisations we've recently invested in.

INVESTING IN:

CO-OP LOVE®

All the seeds will be open pollinated (OP) - the natural process by which plants reproduce and exchange characteristics from generation to generation. OP seeds are resilient and enable adaptation to the locality they are grown in. Unlike F1 hybrids, their genetic material does not belong to anyone; these seeds can be saved for free year after year and crossed to develop new varieties for the common good.

Since 1900 Europe has lost 80% of its food plant biodiversity, and the Seed Co-op is a rare beast. The UK's seed market is dominated by a few multinational companies selling hybrid F1s; these companies operate a business model based on the private ownership of seed, the maximising of profit and the production of seeds that are designed for systems reliant on rapidly-depleting resources. With organic growers heavily dependent on F1 hybrids due to a lack of availability of high quality OP varieties, we believe that the work the Seed Co-op is doing is vital to support, for the sake of all our futures.

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR FARM

As many of you will know back in 2008 Unicorn bought 21 acres of land at Glazebury, less than 14 miles from the shop. After six years providing Unicorn and other outlets with lovely fresh organic veg, Moss Brook Growers, who managed the land at Glazebury, decided to scale down production after drainage problems on the site and financial pressure meant it was no longer a viable option for them.

We learnt a lot from our growers at Moss Brook; namely how physically and financially challenging having a growing business is. Our proximity and relationship with Moss Brook allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the conditions in which our small scale growers operate. We understand better than ever the pressures placed on our growers, and we do our best to have open and flexible relationships with them. With this in mind

we've undertaken some of our own research into how to make small scale growing a financially viable option for a tenant grower.

Right now, the land at Glazebury is not only home a wonderfully increased array of wildlife and biodiversity, but is also been investigated for the potential for protected growing i.e. using poly-tunnels. Protected growing often gives growers an opportunity to plant more high-value crops, allowing them a better chance to survive financially, and, as one grower's explained, "can act as an insurance policy against the unpredictable nature of the weather". In addition we have also been looking into the potential of having a residence on our land. This would allow any potential future growers to have secure affordable housing onsite and more ready access to their land, allowing them to manage it more effectively.

In executing this research we hope to find a good option for small growers, whether by sharing research about planning permission options and the potential for organic protected growing in the North West, or maybe even by providing our site for new growers to embark on a growing project. Watch this space.



AGRIBUSINESS AS USUAL?

Not exactly. March of this year saw the ramping up of a worrying trend for global agriculture with the merging of two corporate agricultural giants, Dow and Dupont.

Since then several other mega agribusiness mergers have been announced; Swiss company Syngenta with ChemChina and the infamous American Monsanto with German pharmaceutical Bayer. These six companies, whom already exercised huge control over global agriculture, have now become three.

Six companies will now control 61% of the world's commercial seed sales and 65% of pesticide sales.

This has caused great concern from many environmentalists and small scale farmers who value food sovereignty over corporate dominance. The scope of control held by these three companies would give them great influence over our food system.

Ownership over a large chunk of the market allows agribusiness to decrease farmer's options for diverse seed. Homogenisation creates more

monocultures which are highly dependent chemical controls such as pesticides, which damage the environment, biodiversity and human health. Greater market control also reduces food choices for consumers and the ability of farmers to provide diverse, healthy, cost effective, quality food. Costs will be passed onto public and will affect the most vulnerable hardest.

Standardisation and decreased choice favoured by these mega businesses has already taken precedence in agriculture with the current dominance of homogenous standardised F1 seeds on the market. A lack of diversity in seed choice and the prevention of open pollination leaves plants vulnerable to climate change and disease. This leaves farmers less able to adapt and more likely to lose crops, leaving them further dependent on seeds sold by agribusiness. This is particularly damaging for the farmers in the global south who are already bearing the brunt of the effects of climate change.

However there is a growing resistance amongst small-scale farmers who collectively feed 70% of

the world's population. These farmers are often better benefitted by using agro-ecological methods of growing which are cheaper and more readily available to them. They understand the benefits of utilising and encouraging biodiversity and many communities around the world are becoming active in seed saving, reviving local and indigenous farming knowledge and other practices that increase food sovereignty and encourage biodiversity.

Fair and sustainable trade is one of the key principles for us as a business, and resisting the dominance of agribusiness is key to ensuring this. For us and many of our suppliers we rely on open and collaborative systems of work and agriculture to ensure what is best for our customers, growers and the environment.

➡ Find out about an alternative approach to the global food system at www.waronwant.org/food-sovereignty

21 YEARS OF UNICORN

Unicorn was established by a small group of people committed to social change, who had a vision for the kind of shop that they wanted to shop in themselves.

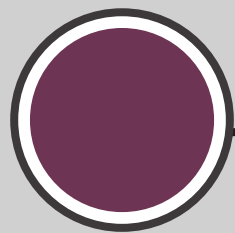
They used as a blueprint two co-ops in the south of England; Daily Bread Northampton and its sister co-op in Cambridge, whose models revolved around direct, bulk purchasing of wholesome foods, priced competitively with supermarkets.

Unicorn's position today at the heart of its community and as a stable fixture on the Manchester food scene can't be separated from the vision and the incredibly hard, often unpaid graft carried out by its (often weary!) early members, to whom the current membership owes a debt of gratitude. We also owe much to the Rochdale Pioneers, our co-operative ancestors of the 1800's. Reacting to harsh market realities they could not control, a group of weavers took matters into their own hands, creating a democratically-run grocery to meet the needs of their community. In doing so they spawned the modern co-operative movement, right here in Greater Manchester. We walk in their footsteps, with the belief that this more democratic, equitable model of doing business is as relevant today as ever.

1996



Finding suitable premises - large enough to accommodate the bulk-buying and supermarket-scale range that was so fundamental to the vision, and yet central enough to provide sufficient passing trade - was a major challenge. The (now two-person) working group scoured South Manchester....if things had been different, Unicorn could have ended up in Levenshulme, Withington, Didsbury, Northenden or Sale! A large, basic space on the (then) edge of Chorlton finally fit the bill, and a lease was signed in August 1996. We shared the ground floor with a housing association, and were tucked away in the side furthest from the main road. We were a bit of a secret, 'til you found us! September of this year saw two years' preparation crystallise into a busy first day's trading. A two person working group had swelled as Unicorn approached finding premises, reaching six by opening day. Sales grew quicker than our cautious forecasting and we were quickly recruiting again, reaching ten members by the end of the first trading year. Woop!



1994

Fed up with the mass-produced food they found at the supermarkets and the expensive offerings of most small health-food shops, Adam York, Griff Dines and Ian Browne started talking about creating some kind of alternative way back in 1994. With the Daily Bread co-op in Northampton providing a practical inspiration and a great source of information, their discussions became more serious in early 1995, when a business plan was produced that set out their vision for a radically different kind of shop.



1995

Unicorn was formally registered on 8th August 1995, but whilst Manchester's Oasis battled Blur in the charts, Unicorn's working group were battling a somewhat sceptical reception from potential sources of finance for this co-operative enterprise, from an audience unfamiliar with worker co-operatives, and unconvinced by the viability of the radical retail model they were proposing. (No animal products?! No management hierarchy?! No way!!). Grant-financing was soon dismissed as improbable, and a lot of graft went into financial planning based on raising loan capital, with the Co-operative & Community Finance Team and other friendly backers eventually outweighing the sceptics at the banks.



2001



Year five, and sales had already grown from £275,000 in the first full year of trading to well over £1 million. Goodbye Unicorns and Celtic knots - a new apple logo freshened up Unicorn's image, and better embodied the friendly, fresh feeling inside the shop. The now-omnipresent Unicorn jute bags made their first ever appearance on our shelves and were wildly popular - how had we ever managed without them!?

2003

A big year. Unicorn's landlords decided to sell up, so we had three options – close, relocate, or buy the whole site ourselves. We all know how that ended! An amazing outpouring of support from our community enabled us to raise £350,000 in customer loanstock, which together with other loan finance made us the proud owners of a 10,000ft² site, doubling our shop floor space in one go. We added a third till and crucially, we became visible from the main road, which may explain what happened the following year!

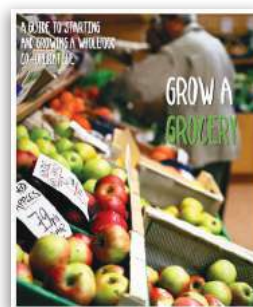


2008

Sales growth had slowed right down after a crazy few years, but there was plenty to do. We built our rooftop wildlife garden and pond and most excitingly, invested in 21 acres of prime growing land near Leigh, just under 14 miles by road from the shop. A new co-op was formed the following year to establish a veg-growing business at the site, and in the subsequent years, two bare hay meadows were transformed into a proper, almost self-contained farm, including a 200 sq metre barn, borehole and irrigation system, connection to the national grid and 60 solar panels, hundreds of metres of native hedging to provide habitat for birds and small mammals, and a compost toilet for staff and visitors. For a whole host of reasons however, the business did not prove viable, and Moss Brook Growers are now taking an extended break from growing in order to let the land recover from drainage issues. In the meantime, we are investigating various options for the future use of the land.



2010



Despite global economic instability, sales rose 10% on the previous year. A growing feeling amongst the membership that our model was something

special led us to create our Grow a Grocery guide, with lots of help and funding from Sustain and their Food Co-ops project. The guide walked potential grocers through all areas of the business, in the hope that it would make starting new, likeminded shops an easier process and help existing shops develop or expand. It has since been downloaded over one thousand times. 2010 was also the year that we decided to grow our prepared food offer, and the keen cooks of Unicorn started turning their passion into a commercial proposition.

2004

2004-5 saw a 50% growth in sales, way beyond anything we could have ever predicted. In response, membership doubled in two years, reaching 31 by 2005, and our governance and management structure was reorganised to accommodate the growing number of member-owners. Still no boss though! (well, that's all of us).



2015

Food prep at Unicorn reached a milestone when we created a purpose-built kitchen for making our soups, salads and baked goods, which had previously been prepared in the cramped quarters behind the deli counter. The kitchen was part of a wider renovation project, in which we replaced the windows and leaking roof, insulated the walls and cladded the outside in Scottish larch. Also this year, we started working with the new Fair Tax Mark scheme and were certified the following year as a Fair Tax business.



ARGENTINA

DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES...

Co-operatives are often formed to provide solutions to challenging situations. Unicorn member Laura shares her perspective on the co-operative movement driven by crisis in her home country

Argentina has more than 20,000 co-operatives. There are several types, but the most fascinating ones are those which, having been abandoned by their owners, were recovered by their workers, and whose flat structures most resemble Unicorn's. Even though workers have been occupying businesses since the 50's, Argentina's recent economic crisis which has taken a drastic toll on its citizens, (unemployment, marginalization, homelessness, hopelessness) has forced communities to ramp up alternatives for secure employment.

Unite and Conquer!

"Ocupar, resistir, producir y educar" (Occupy, Resist, Produce and Educate) is the Recovered Factories workers' motto. Forming co-operatives here wasn't driven by ideology, but because it was workers' best shot to stay in the factory and preserve their jobs.

It can be quite a long, dangerous process and not always successful. If workers do manage to stay and avoid eviction, the first problem they encounter is how to legally secure possession of the property and machines. New laws regarding transfer of ownership have been developed in response – some beneficial, some less so. The movement is growing stronger and as it does so, new laws are being created. Networks with other countries are also being forged, helping the Recovered Factories to become more competitive.

But the victory of workers was achieved with the co-operation and solidarity of the community... it wasn't just the workers' accomplishment. In return, worker co-ops look after their communities and try to provide an answer to their needs. Currently many factories co-habit with secondary schools, (... no Health and Safety there...), where single moms can attend with their kids, and at the same time, workers can gain diplomas. Sharing is caring.

Warning!

Beautiful country... yet... it comes with a "Warning" sign.

On one hand worker co-ops are growing, multiplying, uniting to fight against the multinationals, to restore the harmony between human and environment. On the other hand, corruption is always creeping in. Governments now promote the development of co-ops and hand out incentives, often in order to manipulate the population and gain votes. Co-operatives should arise from the initiative of a group of workers so as to guarantee their autonomy, not from the State.

Despite all this, the movement offers proof that small revolutions generate change. They have contributed to a shift in how Argentina's economy is run. You might be rolling your eyes... "ppff... seriously?" ... but think about it... how many workers would otherwise be unemployed? Companies keep closing and declaring bankruptcy because it's cheaper to relocate to a new town than to pay long-time workers. In Argentina, if you're 21 you're too young and if you're 36 you're too old to work. Worker co-ops make no distinction on age or gender. They promote member development, giving a sense of purpose, and empowerment.

My experience

I became a co-op worker as a result of a "crisis" as well.

Got off the plane in Manchester, needed a job... and here I am... Then, I didn't know what a co-operative was and I had no idea about the co-op movement in my home country. I wonder why there is not enough awareness of what co-ops are and what they do! Is it just me, living like an ostrich with my

head in the ground, or is it us not shouting enough? Do consumers know what they're actually buying... that they're actually the consummators of the Movement?

We're not quite there yet but we are disrupting the linear growth of the Establishment. We are here to stay, with so much room to grow. We are a viable alternative and our strong values make changes. We struggle with a lot of difficulties but our achievements are impressive. We shouldn't try to impose our ideology on others, rather to present communities with a more responsible and committed alternative to improving peoples' welfare. Show that we resist, we challenge but more importantly... we care.

"Don't cry for me Argentina...and as for fortune, and as for fame, they are illusions, they are not the solutions they promised to be"



TURNING SALES INTO SOLIDARITY

UNICORN'S PROJECT SUPPORT

Every year we set aside a sum equal to 5% of the previous year's wage bill to make donations to organisations and projects that share our hope for a more just and sustainable world.

Our two funds are the 1% Fund, for donations to UK projects (usually in Greater Manchester), and the 4% Fund, which covers projects overseas, mostly in the Global South. Through the funds we are proud to stand in solidarity with people who are working to bring about positive change in their communities. The funds together this year total just under £83,000.

4% News

The Participatory Organic Research Extension and Training Project (PORET) is situated in a village called Chaseyama, in the Chimanimani district of eastern Zimbabwe. It had humble beginnings, as a family home and garden built by a couple from the Chikukwa region in response to the tough environment they found in Chaseyama – sandy soils with little fertility, very high temperatures and very low rainfall. Over the years, their home grew into a community resource centre once neighbours saw what could be achieved using permaculture techniques.

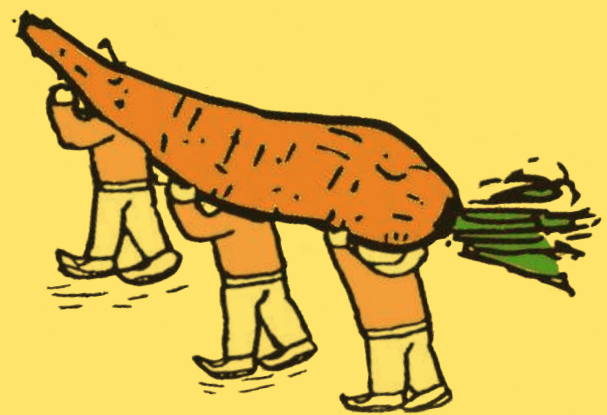
The centre has run a pre-school for 2-5 year olds for nearly a decade, and this year we've been able to support the creation of a food garden for the thirty or so children who travel there each day. The garden is fully integrated into the daily life of the kids, and means they're starting a practical

environmental education at the age of two...if only that happened in the UK! Children eating what they have grown in the garden will remember it for life, and even at such a young age, are starting to understand permaculture concepts and take the knowledge home with them. With its high level of plant diversity, the garden is also a demonstration site for other growers in the local community.

Out of this year's fund we've also made donations towards Tree Aid's 'Regreening Segou' project, which aims to restore tree cover to the degraded landscape and boost food security in Mali; community organisation MUFRAS-32, fighting for social justice and environmental protection in El Salvador; and smallholder farmers association Kasfa in Malawi; funding the purchase of solar powered irrigation systems.

1% News

Partisan Collective workers' co-operative have been working for many months setting up a social space for independent cultural and political activities in Manchester. After trying out a temporary space for six months and a successful crowdfunding campaign (to which we contributed), they found a permanent home at 19 Cheetham Hill Road this summer, and opened their doors at the end of July



with an eclectic weekend programme of music & poetry performances, film screenings and workshops....A taste of things to come we hope!
partisancollective.net

Debdale Eco Centre in Gorton used our funding to support their small scale commercial growing project, through which they offer learning and social opportunities to local residents based on vegan organic food growing. If you're into organic gardening go and have a visit, it's a lovely site overlooking Gorton Reservoir and they offer tours, training, therapeutic gardening and 'sow a seed' programmes for primary schools.

debdale-ecocentre.org.uk

Other activities we've been proud to support this year include the wonderful Growing Together Levenshulme project, supporting refugees and asylum seekers who collectively maintain and develop a productive food growing space; and Manchester Women's Aid, supporting women at risk from domestic violence.

➡ If you are involved with an inspiring project that you'd like to talk to us about, please get in touch - office@unicorn-grocery.coop



Contrast in the vegetation inside and outside PORET's gates



COCONUT OIL ON THE RISE

We've seen an explosion in demand for coconut products in the last few years, and many of us have adopted coconut oil as a regular part of our diets. So we were really interested to read this article, reproduced with kind permission from the Sustainable Food Trust.

Ten years ago, most of us would not have counted coconut oil as a kitchen staple. Fast forward to the present and we are frying with it, baking with it, some of us even eating it straight from the jar by the spoonful. The rise of the coconut has been a meteoric one. British consumers spent £100 million on coconut products last year. The lion's share of this, £64 million, was spent on coconut water – the celebrity-endorsed drink packed with electrolytes, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Coconut water's credentials as a hangover cure, weight loss aid or even its life-saving powers when used as a last-resort alternative to blood plasma in intravenous transfusions have elevated it to superfood (superdrink?) status. It's big business too – PepsiCo is vying to snap up Vita Coco, which generated over \$1 billion in sales last year, as

consumers increasingly shun fizzy drinks for 'guilt-free' alternatives. Coconut water's sibling, coconut oil, is on its own ascendancy, with annual sales rising sharply from £1 million to £16.4 million over the past three years.

Why has coconut oil become so popular so quickly? The endorsement of the 'clean eating' movement has played a large part. The oil is a staple across clean eating gurus Susan Jane White, Sarah Britton, Melissa and Jasmine Hemsley and Joe Wicks's recipes on account of its richness in saturated fats (particularly medium chain triglycerides, MCTs), its subtle flavour, natural sweetness and high smoke point. Evangelical celebrities have played their part too – model Miranda Kerr claims to eat four straight spoonful's a day. And coconut oil's powers are not confined to

the kitchen, it has become an all-round beauty magic bullet too, used in shampoo, moisturiser, make-up remover, mouthwash, lip balm and even as wound care. Not everyone's choice of cooking oil is influenced or dictated by diet trends or top models though – many of us simply enjoy this delicious new addition to our culinary arsenal.

But is coconut oil too good to be true? Other health foods that have risen to rock star status have had their reputations tarnished by social and environmental issues. When quinoa became an overnight superfood sensation its inflated value left local Bolivian communities who have grown and eaten it for over 7,000 years unable to afford it. Almond milk successfully took over soy in the alternative milk market, only to be inextricably implicated in California's record droughts, which



have caused farmers to pump ground water reserves at dangerous levels to keep up with the global appetite for the nut. And the avocado's recent ubiquity and fetishisation has been tainted by the deforestation, environmental degradation and depletion of water supplies the fruit's popularity is causing – it even has ties to Mexican drug cartels.

Oils alone are a veritable mine field of issues and mixed messages. Rapeseed oil arrived on the scene, with blankets of bright yellow fields suddenly seeming to stretch across swathes of the UK, where it was heralded as the local onicotinoid pesticides though – linked to a 30% decline in native wild bees – has led to EU scrutiny and many eschewing it except for the rare, organic cold-pressed versions. And the massive advent of palm oil – estimated to be in 50% of packaged goods in supermarkets including washing detergents, cosmetics, confectionary and ready meals – has had a near-cataclysmic impact. The deforestation, climate change, pollution and human rights abuses caused by palm oil production have been well documented. The industry's direct hand in animal welfare abuses and habitat degradation has become its biggest *bête noir*, with the orangutan becoming a tragic icon in the fight against palm oil – 90% of orangutans' natural habitat has been destroyed for oil production, leaving them at risk of extinction within the next five to ten years.

Will the coconut oil boom have a similarly destructive impact on the environment, animals and the communities that produce it? It seems unlikely. Mainly because coconuts do not lend themselves as easily to mass production as the palm fruits that yield palm oil. It takes the average coconut tree 10-30 years to reach peak production, where it will yield approximately 400 coconuts a year, and almost every one of those coconuts will be picked by hand – the trees are stubbornly resistant to cooperating with machinery. Furthermore, around 95% of coconut growers are small-holders, in stark comparison to palm oil production, owned and controlled by a handful of corporate giants.

This lack of big business, and the coconut tree's inherently slow productivity and low yields have prevented the kind of mass deforestation seen in palm oil production, however coconut oil is hardly issue free. Most coconuts come from coastal India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Burma and the Philippines. Coconut farmers are typically poor, and unsurprisingly the fat prices paid for coconut products in western health food stores and supermarkets are not reaching the producers: the average Filipino coconut farmer is estimated to earn \$1 a day. Another issue is that in the race to keep up with the world's appetite for coconut products, the trees are increasingly being grown as

monocrops, with government-subsidised fertilisers being rolled out to increase cultivation. One great advantage with coconut oil is that, having been popularised by the health food movement rather than the processed food industry, there are countless brands, like Tiana and Tree Harvest, offering fair trade and organic options. These ethical brands also tend to produce cold-pressed virgin coconut oil, which is extracted without the use of heat, so the oil retains more of its health properties and naturally sweet and nutty flavour.

The concern that's harder to get around, and difficult to ignore when we're indiscriminately using the tropical oil to roast vegetables, condition our hair or just dumping spoonfuls straight into our coffee, is that this elixir has crossed the world to reach our homes. Unless you're lucky enough to live in the tropics, the food miles clocked and the carbon dioxide produced to deliver your coconut oil is substantial. While this doesn't mean that we must kick our coconut oil addiction entirely, just as it's taking hold, perhaps we might have to curb our excesses and consume it with the kind of mindfulness with which we buy other goods from far flung places. Coconut oil may not be the new palm oil, but perhaps we shouldn't use it for absolutely everything after all.

www.sustainablefoodtrust.org

OUR COCONUT PRODUCTS... & AN ALTERNATIVE

As demand for coconut product has grown at Unicorn, we've been concerned about the local environmental and social impacts that can be associated with a rapidly growing new food industry, so we have tried to source carefully.

We have been encouraged to learn that coconut is not associated with the same kind of environmental damage posed by the surge in palm oil demand, but clearly plenty of care is still needed to make sure we're sourcing from the right places. As the article points out, organic is nearly always a better option and most of our coconut products are certified. The brands of coconut oil and milks we sell have received reasonable ratings from Ethical Consumer, and we are always looking to see if we can further improve supply. We've just introduced a Fairtrade and organic certified coconut milk from Ma's Happy Life Kitchen, which is sourced from smallholder farmers in Sri Lanka.

Having said that, for the reasons mentioned above, we would definitely encourage people to explore alternatives, and we're proud to stock the first ever cold-pressed organic rapeseed oil produced in Britain, over the Pennines by J. Stringer & Sons in Yorkshire. As it's organic, it doesn't come with a reliance on pesticides and not only is it sourced closer to home, it's got half as much saturated fat as olive oil, and is higher in heart-healthy monounsaturated fat than sunflower and olive oils. Plus it's a rich source of vitamin E, which help keeps skin, nervous and circulatory systems healthy. Like coconut oil it's good for frying, roasting and baking, and our cold-pressed version is also great for dressing salads.



GROW YOUR OWN — GROCERY —



Earlier this year Unicorn hosted a group of food activists and co-operators at one of our Grow-a-Grocery Study Days. These days take place once or twice a year, offering an in-depth insight into our business model for people who have already explored our online guide. Attendants met with members working in lots of different areas of our business, including buying, finance, marketing, governance, personnel, and fresh produce.

"It was lovely to see how everyone's skills were

valued and shared to make Unicorn a success. I learned so much, particularly about sourcing and pricing products." - Karen

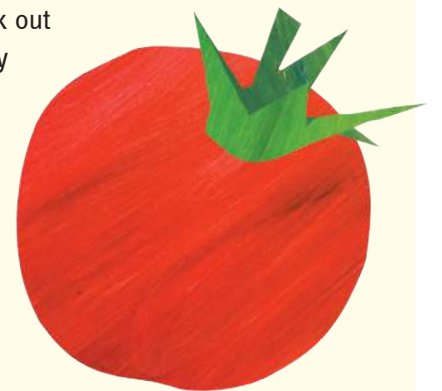


Our visitors were involved in a particularly interesting range of fledgling and well-developed projects, some of which have made significant progress is

the last few months. For example, two workers from the Kitchen co-operative café in Bolton, who are hoping to extend their business to include a shop, found the sourcing and pricing sessions particularly useful. Another couple came from Calico, a social enterprise working to get vulnerable people into employment, as part of their research into setting up a grocery in West Yorkshire. A third group travelled up from Devon and have since transformed a closing farm shop into the Harvest Workers' Co-operative, having just run a crowdfunding campaign to help refit the shop for its new life as a co-operative.

"We found the Study Day really useful and it really gave us some 'food for thought.' It was really interesting getting an understanding of how the co-operative model works, how consensus decision making works and how you split into teams in order to make decisions now that you have 70 members." - Jane

Our next Study Day will take place in 2018, and anyone interested in the meantime can check out the Grow a Grocery section of our website. Please get in touch with us if you want to know more!



MORE UNICORNS?!

Long-time customers can't help but have noticed the increased busy-ness in the shop in recent years. It's been a really exciting time for us and we've loved welcoming so many new faces to the shop, although growth has brought with it certain pressures - on our car park, our warehouse, and (as you may have noticed!) in the aisles.

With demand for what we offer having grown so much, we have wondered for a while what the right response might be. We know more people than ever want to eat healthy, plant-based foods... should we really leave it to the corporate giants to mop up this growing demand? Could there be room for a second Unicorn to flourish in Manchester?

We've always hoped that by making our model publicly available through the Grow a Grocery guide, an independent group of people could replicate the basic elements of Unicorn. We've been really happy that so many people have used the guide to set up

likeminded stores, but so far, despite some fledgling attempts, no-one has done so within the city. After years of closing our minds to the possibility of doing it ourselves, we are starting to accept that it's worth a thought.

So we have just started working with Co-operatives UK and co-op developers at Co-op Culture to explore the possibilities. We're looking at lots of options, from a sister branch of the existing shop to a completely independent replication led by a small group of co-op members moving on. It's very early days, and this is by no means an announcement of our intention to open a second Unicorn! But we're keen to investigate how it might work, and whether the economic and property landscape today, so different from 1996, would allow a new shop of our kind to thrive. We'll let you know how we get on, and in the meantime, if co-operative grocery is your passion, do get in touch with us about the support we offer.

"The recently launched National Development Strategy for Co-operatives aims to significantly increase the size of the Co-op economy, and a key part of this involves successful and innovative co-operatives sharing their expertise and know-how and enabling replication across the UK. Unicorn is a superb example of a successful and innovative retail worker co-op. To build similar models elsewhere in Greater Manchester and even across the UK will be an inspiring story."

Neil Turton, Chief Operating Officer,
Co-operatives UK

Our supplier focus this issue is the Pearls of Samarkand range from Lemberona, who feature in our 'Recommended' file as a company we are especially proud to do business with.

You can spot all of these suppliers and their products by looking for our green apple dotted around the shop.

We stock a range of organic dried fruits from Pearls of Samarkand and most are from Uzbekistan, through which the Silk Road once wound its way through.

Lemberona is the largest European importer of organic and fairtrade certified foods from Uzbekistan. They are an Austrian company with a strong focus on social responsibility, organic agriculture and improving living and working conditions. They have direct communication with partners and smallholder farmers to develop long term sustainable relations, making each of their products fully traceable from field to consumer.

Over the years Uzbekistan has suffered from huge problems with their energy supply, partly due to an increase in population and rapid economic growth. This has had a big impact on companies processing goods in Uzbekistan including the organic drying company working with Lemberona,

TREASURES OF THE — SILK ROAD —

as drying fruit and veg requires enormous amounts of energy. During periods of no sunshine (night time or bad weather) they were heavily dependant



on the use of gas, the supply of which was unreliable or non-existent, as well as being an environmentally damaging source of energy.

A lightbulb moment occurred back in 2011 with the realisation that the Samarkand region enjoys a

large number of sunny days throughout the year, making it the ideal climate for the production and use of sustainable solar energy! They now have the worlds' largest solar powered drying facility! The huge solar panels absorb the days' heat which is then retained in an enormous insulated rock so that energy can also be used during off-peak hours and at night as the energy stored and emitted by the rock is converted back into warm drying air. This whole facility is totally self-sufficient, producing 100% renewable energy, a CO2 positive system that has minimal impact on the environment! This type of temperature-controlled processing is not only innovative and sustainable it also ensures that all the important nutrients, vitamins and enzymes are retained in their products.

"In all the activities we commit to, we are very much aware of our responsibilities, making great efforts to ensure that everything is done in harmony with nature and in the interests of humans."

The Lemberona team

HAPPY HANDMADE THURSDAYS!



Exciting news here at Unicorn! You can now grab Handmade Bakery bread on Thursdays, as well as Tuesdays and Fridays.

You'll know when HMB arrives as the alluring aroma of their warm freshly baked loaves wafts through our shop. A big hit with us Unicorners, we can't get enough of their delicious bread and love that they are also a workers co-operative!

We're over the moon to have an extra HMB delivery day which has all been down to their recent move to larger premises. They now have an open-plan café/bakery so that customers can get a peek into their 24 hour artisan bread making process. The menu features their freshly baked bread as well as produce from their newly acquired kitchen garden! They also run a number of courses on site which brings added value to the amazing atmosphere they have created in their new space.

Healthier for you – using only four main ingredients, flour, salt, water and yeast apart from adding walnuts, pumpkin seeds and such like there are absolutely no additives or improvers used in HMB bread! They use

local, organic, stoneground ingredients where possible, which is not only good for the environment but also good for you - containing more nutrients and minerals such as Zinc and Magnesium. All their bread dough is fermented overnight; this long fermentation process helps break down potentially harmful gliadin proteins (a component of gluten) and develops beneficial acids and bacteria that make bread more easily digestible. Long fermentation also helps to retain vitamins and keeps the bread fresh for longer.

So pop a loaf of Handmade onto your weekly shopping list, you're sure to be a fan if you're not already! Or have a trip to their wonderful new premises in Yorkshire, they are cycle friendly with ample space for bikes and locks are provided. If you've never tried their bread before we have recently started doing a chunk of bread for 50p to go with our delicious deli hot soup.

As a not-for profit community-supported bakery they built on the philosophy of providing a viable alternative to processed industrially manufactured bread by bringing back traditional bread making skills - they have achieved this and more. We hope you love and enjoy Handmade Bakery and their bread as much as we do.



WHAT'S COOKING?

The Unicorn 'ready-to-go' range has grown massively in the last year, from humble beginning in the tiny kitchen behind the deli counter, it's now fully up and running in our commercial kitchen upstairs. Co-op member Louise explains what's changed..

We have expanded our range of sweet treats with new additions such as the breakfast cookies and chocolate banana truffles now being regular options on the counter,. We've also been able to improve consistency of the old favourites - curry, dhal and chilli are now available daily, along with 6-8 rotating salads on most days. The extension we completed in 2015 has also enabled more members to be trained on food prep and allowed us to find our own areas of specialising; I mainly do baking, it's where my interests and passions lie and I love finding new recipes like the beany brownie to bring to customers.

The food prep team works closely with the veg team and suppliers to utilise the seasonal range of fruit and veg on offer. These days, knowing that we can use any surplus veg means the buyers can order with more confidence that things won't go to waste.

DELI RECIPES ON OUR NEW WEBSITE:

We have put some of your favourite deli recipes on our brand new website (launching in October), here are a couple to get you started. Find lots and lots more at www.unicorn-grocery.coop

DELI FAVOURITE: LENTIL & PUMPKIN BROTH



- 1 x medium onion
- 2 tbsp rapeseed or olive oil
- 1 x large carrot
- 2 x garlic cloves
- 1 bushy sprig rosemary
- 250g small green lentils, such as Le Puy
- 1.25 litres vegetable stock
- 2 x bay leaves
- 1.5kg pumpkin or butternut squash (weight before peeling)
- 2 tbsp red-wine vinegar
- 1 x handful roughly chopped parsley

Peel the onion, cut it in half from root to tip, then into thick slices. Warm the oil in a large casserole

dish then add the onion and cook over a low to moderate heat for 15 minutes or so, until soft and pale gold. Meanwhile scrub and dice the carrot and stir into the onion.

Peel the garlic and slice thinly. Pull the leaves from the rosemary stems and roughly chop, then add to the softening onions with sliced garlic. Cook on medium heat until lightly coloured, then tip in the lentils, bay leaf and a litre of the stock. Bring the mixture to the boil, then lower the heat so that the lentils simmer gently for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, peel and seed the pumpkin/squash and cut the flesh into large chunks. Add to the lentils and leave to simmer until the pumpkin/squash is thoroughly tender – about 15 minutes. Add the salt, black pepper, and red-wine vinegar. Stir in the parsley.

Remove two large ladles of the broth and purée in a blender or food processor with the remaining 250ml of stock, or use a stick blender and pulse a few times. Mix this with the rest of the broth & serve with a few glugs of olive oil and crusty bread.



DELI FAVOURITE: TOFU CAESAR SALAD



Salad

- 1 x small savoy (or or any leafy green cabbage or kale)
- 1 x small red onion
- 50 ml red wine vinegar
- 200g tofu (either firm, silken, smoked or plain), mashed or cubed.

Dressing

- 1 tsp linseed soaked in 50ml of hot tap water.
- 1tsp wholegrain mustard
- 1 small clove garlic
- 100g nuts (cashew, walnut, almond etc)
- 15g yeast flakes
- 100ml olive oil
- 60ml balsamic vinegar
- 100ml tamari soya sauce
- 1tsp lemon juice

Put linseed in hot water and leave to soak. Chop the onion finely and soak in vinegar. Whilst this is pickling, make the dressing. For the dressing, blend garlic and nuts as smooth as possible, add yeast and blend further. Then add linseed, olive oil, balsamic, lemon juice and tamari, and blend until as smooth as possible. Once dressing is made, wash and finely shred the savoy/greens (removing hard stems or ribs) and add the pickled onion. Finish by adding the Tofu. Pour over the dressing and mix with your hands until evenly distributed.