

UNICORN NEWS

FREE
AUTUMN 2024



MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE

It's no surprise that we are nature lovers but (as with most things) time, place and circumstance limit what is possible. We do what we can with what we have...and then we push for a little bit more!

Over the years this leaky and breezy concrete block of a building has benefited from many improvements: a living roof with a pond, solar panels to power our trading, a much-loved customer garden and a retrofit/extension carefully designed to stay cool when it's hot and to keep our energy use low. We always look at maintenance and improvements through the lens of our principles.

So, we thought maybe we could give a bit more space back to nature in the concrete jungle. Planted early this spring, the roof of the trolley park is filled now with plants propagated from meadows around the northwest. Species like bird's-foot trefoil, cowslip, musk mallow and selfheal, that have adapted to our climate

and support regional diversity rather than the dominant cultivars that are typically offered by commercial seed suppliers. All growing on the roof that keeps your shopping trolley dry (which in turn was built using timbers from the old porch!)



We are also excited to be installing some bird houses on the front wall of the building with the help of local conservation group South Manchester Swifts. The group is helping the red-listed endangered swifts, a bird that's struggling because of the loss of nesting sites, decline of insect populations & climate crisis.

Keep an eye out on the wall facing the car park; as swifts are already nesting in our area we stand a good chance of them moving in, fingers crossed! And the wildflowers on the trolley park could help as they attract a range of pollinating insects the swifts like to eat!

SUPERMARKET PRICE CHECK:

CHECKED 30/08/24	UNICORN	ASDA	MORRISONS	SAINSBURY'S	TESCO	WAITROSE
Organic unsweetened soya milk (1ltr)	Vitasi £1.49	Alpro £2.00	Alpro £2.00	Alpro offer: £1.70 usually: £2.10	Plenish offer: £1.75 usually: £2.25	Alpro offer: £1.50 usually: £2.20
Organic black beans (400g tin)	Classico £1.05 (400g)	n/a	Biona £1.60 (400g)	Own Brand £1.05 (380g)	Biona £1.60 (400g)	Duchy £1.15 (400g)
Brazil nut pieces (250g)	£2.65	£3.00	£2.86	£3.75	£3.31	£3.75
Engevita B12 yeast flakes (100g)	£3.79	£4.00	£4.00	£3.90	£4.15	£4.20
Love Corn BBQ snack (115g)	£1.69	n/a	n/a	offer: £1.65 usually: £2.20	£2.20	£2.30
Organic basmati rice (1kg)	£3.29	£3.50	n/a	£6.00	£6.00	£6.80
Curry powder (100g)	£1.05	£1.69	£2.35	£1.60	£1.70	£2.21



If you are interested in the conservation group or installing your own swift box, get in touch with the group: southmanchesterswifts.co.uk or scan the code.



SWIFTS: HELEN LUCY

'As April becomes May, swifts leave Sub-Saharan Africa and fly some 5,000 miles to their breeding sites in the UK. The journey takes about 5 days, storms permitting!

WOMEN: ON YOUR BIKES!

Belinda Everett has already been crowned Greater Manchester's "Bicycle Mayor" by the global cycling organisation BYCS. She founded and runs Bee Pedal Ready, which offers group rides, bike maintenance training and more to local women to build skills and confidence. She tells us how she founded the social enterprise with a mission: to diversify the cycling sector.

“We want to:- increase awareness, encourage more women into the sector especially those from culturally-rich communities and encourage everyone to fix and ride their bikes.

Bee Pedal Ready provides a safe space primarily for women and girls to learn, repair and ride bikes. As a black-led organisation, we are already within the community and have a strong understanding of the setbacks and hurdles many have to face. By creating pathways of opportunities through confidence building, bike maintenance workshops and events; Bee Pedal Ready creates a social and significant impact.

'Dr Bikes' and 'Learn to fix' sessions encourage the community to repair different types of bikes, learning from experienced female bike mechanics. We

understand that representation matters and want to elevate our community. Our bike rides link green spaces, giving riders the opportunity to feel immersed in nature.

As part of our green commitment we want to encourage local businesses to utilise our cargo trike service to deliver their products. We have been delivering food to a Forest School (Manchester Bees) over the holidays in East Manchester, in collaboration with MUD Kitchen (Manchester Urban Diggers) to deliver healthy cooked lunches.

If you are a part of a community group or business that would benefit from cargo trike delivery service, Dr Bikes maintenance, workshops or rides please get in contact!
beepedalready.com



Bicycle Mayor & Bee Pedal Ready's Belinda

VEG NEWS

Weather Woes

We know we're not the first to grumble about this year's weather! Between October and March, England experienced rainfall nearly 60% above the 10-year average. This caused havoc for growers, particularly those at field-scale, where waterlogging caused massive delays to planting. Those plants that managed to survive were stunted by cooler, cloudier conditions, becoming easy prey for slugs (more of whom had survived the warmer winter).

Better late than never, once the season got going, it did not disappoint, and our displays are now groaning with UK produce. We're starting to enjoy the bountiful harvests of squash, sweetcorn, and most beloved of all here, UK apple season, which has got off to a very promising start with varieties coming in thick and fast from our orchard growers in Herefordshire, Kent and Suffolk.

Soft fruits have struggled with the wet and balmy conditions. Plum trees have a complex relationship with the climate, needing a period of cold followed by a period of warm weather to produce blossoms in spring. This year's unseasonal weather caused havoc for their natural cycle and delayed the fruit significantly, with heavy rain also damaging the delicate blossoms. However, we have finally been enjoying customer and staff-favourite Victoria plums, courtesy of Margaret Cherry and Martin Soble, and also Joe Pardoe and Duncan Gielty towards the backend of August. A shorter, but no less sweet season for UK plums this year.



Carey Organics, Herefordshire

Farming in Crisis

Last winter, Guy Singh-Watson, founder of Riverford and passionate advocate for UK farmers, wrote for this newsletter about their campaign urging the UK government to "get fair about farming." It garnered 113,000 signatures, enough to be debated

in Parliament. Guy was there to champion the cause, accompanied by 49 scarecrows symbolising the 49% of fruit and veg growers who fear they may go out of business within the next 12 months. The debate focused on the power imbalance between growers and supermarkets buyers, and the impact of this on the prices paid to farmers.

Since then, the Soil Association has launched its “save our fruit and veg” campaign with some stark statistics. Less than 2% of UK farmland is used for fruit and veg production, and the UK imports 80% of fruit and nearly half of our veg. We’d love it if customers could support the Soil Association’s campaign - scan the code to find out more.



Goodbyes

Sadly, these difficult market conditions hit close to home when Glebelands in Sale took the difficult decision to cease trading in June. Long-time customers will know we have cherished a close relationship with our most local growers for many years, with Dan taking over the site in 2021. Originally established by one of Unicorn’s founding co-op members, this small corner of Sale is a horticultural oasis, a secret garden nestled within a residential area. Many of us have visited, worked, volunteered, and most importantly, enjoyed the spectacular produce grown there, which makes the closure particularly saddening.

Dan is now seeking the right group of people with the time and energy to make a real go of the site. It could be a fantastic opportunity for the right buyers, given the extensive infrastructure in place, some of which Unicorn has helped to fund over the 23 years we have been trading with the site. We will look to support Dan as much as possible in this transition period, but we also want to express our heartfelt thanks for all of his hard work and the exceptional produce he has provided during his time there. We look forward to the possibility of a potential new beginning for this beloved site and will continue to support its future in any way we can.

As we navigate these changes, we reflect on other relationships we’ve built over the years. Francis Sampson from Penzance, Cornwall, has weathered many storms, and it’s now time to wish him a happy retirement.



Francis & grandchild!

The mild winters and unique microclimate of Francis’ corner of the Cornish peninsula are ideal for winter brassicas, providing a supply of UK produce at times when it is otherwise scarce. He and his wife Marcia have been supplying us with winter cauliflowers, delicious purple-sprouting broccoli, spring greens, hard cabbages, swedes, and luscious green kale for as long as anyone can remember. They’ve run their huge site as a team for 25 years, with no outside help.

Our UK veg buyers, Lee and Will, visited in April to say a proper goodbye and thank you, and to meet the new growers who’ll be supplying us with winter caulis going forward. While we are sad to say goodbye, we want to thank the Sampsons for all of their hard work over the years, for the spectacular produce, and for being such a joy to work with. We hope they enjoy the extra time with their grandchildren that they’ve so been looking forward to.

Hello Wyreside Mushrooms!

To end an up & down veg news on a note of unbridled positivity, we have been bowled over by our newest Lancashire growers, Hayley and Paul of Wyreside Mushrooms in Garstang.



Wyreside Mushrooms

Established in 2022, Wyreside has achieved remarkable success in a short space of time. They burst onto the scene with an incredible range of speciality, gourmet mushrooms, including blue, grey, king, golden and pink oysters and the standout customer favourite - the majestic lion’s mane. Their success has been fuelled by unrivalled dedication, hard graft and encyclopaedic knowledge of all things mycelium!

Looking ahead, they plan to increase production significantly, and have agreed a 10-year lease at new premises with expansion potential and better insulation, which will allow them to continue full production during the colder months. Exciting news for us, as more of their wonderful mushrooms (currently the greengrocer equivalent of gold dust) will be available throughout the week.



We’ve recently given them £1,000 of a £5,000 application from Unicorn’s Growers Fund, which exists to strengthen resilience in our supply chain and acknowledges the challenges growers face in a distorted market. Our success is closely intertwined with theirs, and supporting skilled new entrants like Paul and Hayley is at the heart of what we want to do. Once their business plan is finalised we look forward to awarding the remaining £4000, and we hope to be trading with them for many years to come.

VEG PRICE COMPARISON green = organic, red = conventional

Prices checked 29/08/24

PRODUCT	UNICORN	TESCO	ASDA	WAITROSE	SAINSBURY'S	MORRISONS
Apples / kg	£3.09	£3.73	£3.65	£4.29	£3.55	£3.31
Carrots / kg	£1.49	£1.64	£1.60	£2.00	£2.00	£1.67
Fennel / kg	£3.99	£4.16	£4.04	£5.25	£5.00	£5.00
Garlic / kg	£5.99	£11.23	£9.44	£12.10	£12.50	£10.53
Kale / 100g	59p	93p	50p	£1.06	50p	53p
Onions / each	£1.49	£2.00	£2.00	£2.27	£2.13	£2.00
Pears / each	£3.49	£4.55	£4.03	£4.92	£4.17	£3.21

LEADING LIVES: A FELLOW WORKER CO-OP, IN SOCIAL CARE

We chatted with Charlene from this Suffolk co-op at the Worker Co-op Weekend, who are doing things very differently in a crucial sector.

Tell us about Leading Lives and how you came into being?

We were formed in 2012 as part of a programme aimed at transferring local authority services into the independent sector. The co-operative model was deliberately chosen because it recognised the workforce as being the most important asset to be transferred, as well as putting people at the heart of decision making.

Leading Lives is now an award-winning, fully employee-owned, social enterprise and workers co-operative employing 460+ people and providing social care services to more than 1200 people.



Can you describe your participation as a worker and co-owner in Leading Lives' strategy & management?

I feel I can contribute to the company's future success by being part of discussions and asking questions when needed; I have lots of opportunities to contribute. This isn't because I'm a service manager but because my voice is valid as an employee. And as employees, we've developed programmes to care for ourselves, like awards to celebrate successes, a well-being programme and profiles of all employees, so we know how best to support each other. We use co-production methods which means working with employees plus customers and their families to improve and develop the services together.

Through working in a co-operative way and involving employees at all levels, we can drive positive change throughout the company.



Day to day, what difference does it make to you, and to care recipients, that the enterprise is worker-owned and controlled?

I've worked in health & social care for 20 years and for companies that don't value the employees or even the individuals they look after. Leading Lives' values match my own and because of that, I feel a part of a community that's been created.

Many employees have expressed feeling like this and because they feel happy to be at work they provide fantastic care and support to all those we look after. We've worked with families to provide a home for their sons & daughters, support has been provided to individuals that other care providers didn't want to take on. Leading Lives doesn't often conform to one box or one idea but willing to explore how we can make it work.

Charlene Mckechnie, Leading Lives

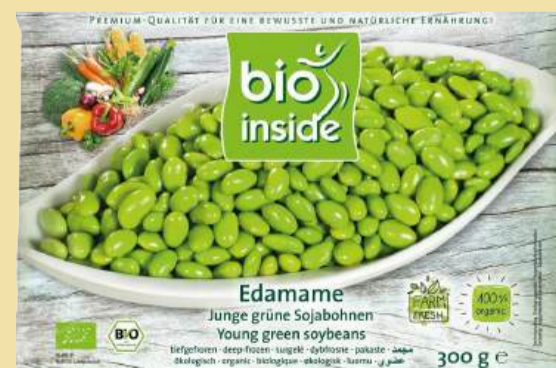
FROZEN WHOLESOME!

We often speak of our pride in our commitment to wholesome and minimally-processed produce, and that extends to the frozen aisle, which in most supermarkets is closely associated with a very high level of processing! We've worked pretty hard to uphold this core principle in our expanded freezer section, and in doing so, offer those who find themselves less able to cook fresh or from scratch the opportunity to enjoy food that is wholesome (as well as delicious!)

We're particularly proud of our ever-expanding frozen fruit and veg range, all of which is certified organic, the same as our fresh produce. Everything from the basics like peas, beans, and spinach, to those less-readily available ingredients such as bilberries, sour cherries, and edamame.

Elsewhere we'd like to sing the praises of the brands that embody our ethos without compromising on convenience. Brands like Perfect Season, whose organic certified patties & burgers don't rely on synthetic fillers or enhancers but instead champion whole grains and vegetables. We've also got an unbeatable range of Booja Booja ice creams, each of which utilises only a handful of easily-recognisable ingredients. We've even managed to get our hands on Natural Cool's organic hash browns and chips, for those special occasions!

And when cooking isn't an option at all, we're proud of our own-brand range of wholesome ready meals, all of which are made by co-op members in our on-site kitchen, with the very same ingredients you see in the shop.



CORN ON THE HOB

September is prime sweetcorn season, and the very best way to eat it is grilled or BBQ'd. Top with lime & chilli for some big flavour.

GRILLED CORN

- 2 corn on the cob
- 2 tablespoons vegan block at room temp
- ½ tsp chilli flakes or ½ a fresh chilli finely chopped
- Pinch smoked paprika
- Pinch black pepper
- Drizzle olive oil
- 1 lime, zested

Remove the husks & rub cobs all over with a little oil and black pepper, then put them under a hot grill or in a griddle pan, turning a few times, for about 10 minutes (maybe a little more) until they are cooked with nice charred lines. Or if you're firing up the BBQ, use that instead for a really smoky flavour!

While they're cooking, mix the chilli, paprika & a little lime zest (to taste) into the vegan block.

Remove the cobs from the grill, let cool for a minute, then slather them with the butter mix while they're still warm. Squeeze a little lime juice over the top and enjoy!



MEXICAN SWEETCORN & SMOKED CHILI SOUP

- 6 sweetcorn cobs
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 sprig tarragon, chopped
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- 1 tbsp light olive oil
- 1 knob Vegan Block butter
- 1 tsp chipotle sauce (we sell the Conchitas brand), plus more to serve
- 400ml stock
- 2 tbsp Sojade La Fraîche (creme fraîche alternative, found in our chilled section)
- small bunch coriander, chopped

Sit a cob on its end on a board. Cut the kernels from the cob with a small sharp knife in a downwards motion. Repeat for all the cobs. Heat a heavy-based pan and slowly fry the onion and garlic with the tarragon and allspice in the olive oil.

After a couple of minutes, add the sweetcorn kernels, the vegan block and the chipotle in adobo. Sweat for a few minutes until beginning to soften. Then add the stock and cook quickly until the sweetcorn is soft and the stock is reduced a little.

At this point, either serve as it is, or if you want a thicker soup, blend about ⅔ keeping the remaining ⅓ aside to add back in for texture. Ladle into bowls and serve with a spoon of La Fraîche on top, sprinkled with the coriander. Sprinkle a little more of the chipotle in adobo, too if you like, or some dried chipotle chile.

ADAPTED FROM STEVIE PARLE'S DOCK KITCHEN COOKBOOK



WIN!

SPOT THE SPUD

WIN!

Some of you might remember spot the ball, we bring you spot the spud.

Where is the spud in our kitchen?! Find it and you may win a £40 Unicorn giftcard (5 winners will be drawn in early December).

Put a cross in a box and drop your slip in the blue post box in the till area by 1st December. Good luck!

NAME

CONTACT NUMBER

EMAIL



LENTIL LOVERS

We sell a lot of things besides lentils but they are one of our most essential products, and in fact dried red lentils have barely left our weekly top sellers list in 28 years! And with good reason. Proper pantry staples, lentils are cheap, keep forever and are absolutely packed with nutrition.

They're also high in 'resistant fibre', meaning they are resistant to breaking down until they reach the gut, where the good bacteria get to feed on them. What can result in bloating for some people is also part of what makes them good for us! (It's worth noting that lentils, especially brown ones, tend to cause less of a problem with this than beans). Finally, they are excellent at keeping us full.

We know that plant protein is generally a lower-carbon way of nourishing humans, but lentils are really stellar! Like all the legume family - such as broad beans - lentils have the unusual ability to transform nitrogen in the air into a form they can utilise (most plants can't do this), which then replenishes the soil for future crops. This is called nitrogen fixing and is why this family of plants is often used instead of fertilisers in organic systems.

Even in conventional farming systems, lentils can reduce reliance on fertilisers, and they're also really efficient in terms of water use.



Unusual ways with lentils



An explosion of interest has led to some really creative ways of using lentils, from soya-free tofu to gluten-free flatbreads.

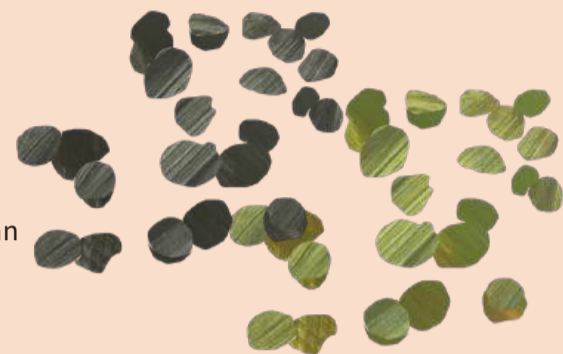
Search 'lentils' on our website for more or scan the code



Best lentils for salads:

BELUGA OR PUY

Unlike red or yellow lentils, both Beluga & Puy maintain their shape and "bite" when cooked, staying firm rather than creamy. Puy are a small and firm variety of green lentils specifically grown in the Puy region of France. Beluga are a small, dark variety known for their rich, earthy flavour and firm texture.



Best lentils for chilli:

BROWN

These have a mild, earthy flavour, but their taste is not as robust as some other lentil varieties which means they easily absorb the flavours of the seasonings and ingredients they are cooked with. Though not as firm as beluga lentils, they still hold their shape when cooked.



Best lentils for dhal:

YELLOW OR RED

Both yellow & red lentils tend to be sold "split", with the outer coat removed, which means they cook relatively quickly compared to other lentil varieties. Both are fairly mild in flavour, particularly yellow. Because they break down and become creamy when cooked, they're good choices for thickening soups, stews and curries where you're after a creamy consistency. They're also the most commonly used lentils for dhals.



Best lentils for a burger:

GREEN

With an ever so slightly peppery flavour and a hint of nuttiness, green lentils stand out more than some and also retain their shape. They're good for soups and stews where you don't want them to break right down and particularly good for burgers & patties because they have good binding abilities.



Best lentils to sprout:

ANY!

Lentils grow long sprouts and are almost foolproof. They're good on sandwiches and in wraps, or cooked in a stir fry. Sprouting them may also avoid the gas some people experience with cooked lentils, as the process breaks down the starchy endosperm. We sell sprouting mixes, but you can sprout ANY of our pulses for similar results. You just soak them, rinse, drain and repeat until sprouts form!





UNICORN'S TARKA DHAL

As found in the deli fridge at Unicorn

- 300g red lentils
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 inch ginger, peeled and chopped
- ¼ of a deseeded red chilli (more/less to taste)
- glug rapeseed oil
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 ½ tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp black mustard seeds
- 1 tsp onion seeds
- handful fresh coriander
- salt to taste



Rinse the lentils twice. Bring to a rolling boil in plenty of water then turn the heat down to the lowest setting. Stir in the turmeric and salt.

In a hot frying pan (no oil), add the mustard seeds. Once they start popping, add the rest of the spices, turn down the heat & stir for at least 1 minute. Then add to the lentils as they cook.

In a separate pan, fry the onions in oil until browned.

With a stick blender & jug, puree the garlic, ginger & chilli in oil. Add to the onions & cook (stirring regularly) for a further 5 minutes.

Add the cooked onion, garlic, ginger & chilli mix to the lentils & continue to simmer gently.

Once cooked, take off the heat and add finely chopped coriander. Stir through and add salt to taste.



WORKER WHAT??!! AN EXPLAINER

We're pretty enthusiastic about worker co-ops, we know we're always banging on about them. So back in 2021 when there was talk of setting up our own federation for worker owned and controlled businesses, it was inevitable that we'd end up being part of it.

Workers.coop has been officially running since 2022, with Unicorn members sitting on the founding Board, the comms group and the movement building group. And for Co-ops Fortnight this year we helped them produce this worker co-op explainer.



If you'd like a few copies for your organisation, get in touch - office@unicorn-grocery.coop or download online by scanning the code.

How do worker cooperatives... work?

Every worker co-op is different. The co-op may have started from one person's idea; a shared project among friends; a conflict between private owners and their workers; a peaceful handover; or a workplace occupation. It may even begin informally inside another type of organisation.

Some worker co-ops have a 'flat' structure and equal hourly pay, but there is a range of models. Whatever management system is chosen, it's chosen democratically by the workers, who have the power to change and improve it. What they all have is a commitment to the co-op values and principles that have been worked out and agreed over many decades, applied in many countries, and interpreted across different cultures.



"It's a fun place to work, I learn about new stuff all the time. We act in line with the workers' values, which enables us to support marginalised or oppressed groups, and that's important for making everyone feel welcome. We also care about our own working conditions and how life is for us as workers. This focus is not something you'd get if we were not a cooperative. I have good job security, with a permanent contract and a living wage - and the flexibility is really good."

Allama Munir, Birmingham Bike Foundry

"Working in a co-op gives me autonomy, allowing for the fact that I have to work with others, and with the added benefits that come with working in a collective. On the one hand every individual has a reasonable measure of control over their work patterns. On the other, everyone takes their share of responsibility for both client work and administrative tasks. The environment makes for healthy working relationships, which in turn means greater motivation and commitment to the co-op's purposes."

Phil Boast, Third Sector Accountancy

Liberating Work

We hope you've enjoyed this 'worker co-ops 101' guide. Maybe you'll want to take it further. It's written and produced by **workers.coop**, the federation of worker co-ops based in the UK. We were set up as a network and voice for worker cooperation, bringing co-ops and supporters together to advance our common interests and work towards shared goals.

The federation offers advice and information for the 'worker co-op curious', as well as training and support for existing co-ops. It brings cooperators together to learn, organise and gain strength.

Check out the workers.coop website, where you can find guides, resources and merchandise including the *Worker Cooperative Code*. You can book in a free chat, or sign up to receive news and information.

- Support worker co-ops by joining the *Worker Cooperative Solidarity Fund* (www.solidfund.coop) for £1 a week
- Become a workers.coop supporter by signing up to receive our news and information



workers.coop

KIMCHI & KOMBUCHA: WHAT'S WHAT



Historically, fermentation has been used as a means of food preservation across cultures, and fermented foods like kimchi are also incredibly tasty, adding an extra and very specific tangy flavour profile and crunch on the side of pretty much anything you can imagine.

But it's the potential health benefits of these products that have got a lot of us climbing on the fermentation train in recent years, particularly their reported effect on the gut microbiome. Fermented foods are made through controlled microbial growth. Some of them, such as kimchi and sauerkraut, are populated by wild microorganisms, while others, such as yoghurt, kefir and kombucha, have a SCOBY (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast) added to initiate fermentation.

When eaten, it's thought that some of these living microbes will travel through your digestive tract to support the trillions of microbes already living in your gut. This matters because we now understand just what a huge role gut health plays in overall health, including the working of the immune system and the body's metabolic functions.

Having said that, we've always steered very clear of making magic-bullet claims about specific foods, so we wouldn't use the term "probiotic" for any of our fermented foods. In line with scientific standards, we believe the term should only be used if a specific bacterial strain is present at a defined level, and has a proven impact on health.

WHAT WE WILL SAY (AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR)

Having said that, there's no doubt that fermented foods can contain loads of live microorganisms. So if you are keen to try and pack in as much of these as possible, the main things to look for are "naturally fermented" plus the words "raw" or "unpasteurised" - the latter two meaning that it hasn't been heat-treated in any way (cooking & pasteurisation

completely destroy live bacterial content).

When it comes to kombuchas, keep an eye on sugar content. A traditional kombucha recipe wouldn't have more than 3.5g sugar per 100ml. Also bear in mind that a lot of the biggest brands use a commercial kombucha concentrate so they don't have to look after their own SCOBY, buying in a naturally-fermented but mass-produced kombucha in concentrated form, then adding their own flavourings.

Contrast this with the production values of a company like Unicorn supplier Leftfield, who tell us... "We've worked very hard in the past five years to improve the flavour of our kombucha (so good it doesn't need flavourings) by cultivating our SCOBY to the point where it can maintain the right balance of the right bacteria and yeast to produce a really consistent and award winning flavour. It's why we're on the menu at the Ritz, but part of that is about making its health benefits accessible to as many people as possible (we're also in an honesty shop in the Hebridean isles)."

SO, WHAT ABOUT UNICORN'S RANGE?

Kimchi & sauerkraut: All ours are naturally fermented. The vast majority (like Loving Foods & Eaten Alive) are also raw, with the only exception being some of the Morgiel lines of sauerkraut, which are heat-treated so will not contain live cultures.

Kombucha: Again, all ours are naturally fermented, and they're all raw apart from the Suma range of cans, which are pasteurised (although live cultures are re-introduced back into this one afterwards). None are produced using concentrate, and all have sugar levels well within the traditionally low range.

REFRIGERATION & SHELF LIFE

Obviously, fermented food & drinks have been part of food cultures around the world for centuries, a very long time before the advent of refrigeration! And we stock some interesting lines where production methods

allow for a live product that's still stable at room temperature.

The Cultured Food Co raw kimchis and sauerkrauts, for example, are given such a long fermentation process (several months!) that most of the starches in the vegetables have already been broken down by bacteria and yeasts. As a result, there is very little or no ongoing fermentation and the product remains stable. They say "the longer fermentation process we use not only enhances the complexity of the flavour but also increases the content of beneficial bacteria. This is why our sauerkrauts do not need to be chilled".

We sell two raw kombuchas that can also be kept at (cool-ish) room temperature - Leftfield and Mighty Brew, the latter of which explain "we have developed a method that allows our kombucha to be stored ambient while retaining all its benefits. We use special filters to remove excess yeast, which prevents further fermentation in the bottle, while allowing the live cultures to pass through".

When it comes to shelf life, the picture isn't entirely clear. Some feel there's a clear time limit on the longevity of live cultures, others have tested their products and found little or no effect throughout a longer shelf life. If you want to find out yourself whether a kombucha is still alive, simply make some sweetened tea with boiling water, leave to cool, then add the kombucha to it. Leave it in a warm place and if it's alive, a SCOBY or "mother" will form within a week or two! You can even use this to make your own.

Having said ALL of this - it's worth remembering that live cultures aren't the only benefit of these products - they're also full of antioxidants, vitamins & minerals and in the case of kimchi, fibre. Plus, and this is the main thing, they taste good!

AND FINALLY...

Let's raise an occasional small glass of red wine to Michael Mosley, who showed us how this too could help keep our heart healthy and our gut bacteria blooming.

SOME HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

As Unicorn celebrates our 28th birthday, here are some others to toast!

BRIDGE 5 MILL

A home for Manchester changemakers since 1999

Just three years younger than Unicorn is Ancoats' Bridge 5 Mill, a restored silk mill on the Ashton Canal providing a home for Manchester changemakers for the past 25 years.

Within its red brick walls, groups & individuals champion a diverse range of causes; providing therapy for creatives, campaigning for nuclear disarmament, advocating for unpaid carers, offering advice on green retrofitting and supporting the artistic practices of people from refugee and migrant communities. It's a physical hub for grassroots organisations to share space and collaborate, and offers both permanent office space and event hire.



Happy birthday to Bridge 5 Mill; a vibrant fusion of Manchester's industrial heritage and its progressive future! bridge5mill.org.uk



180 YEARS OF THE MODERN CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT!

Unicorn owes much to our co-operative ancestors of the 1800's. During this period, living conditions for workers in northern industrial towns were incredibly tough. Flour, sugar, butter and oats were expensive. Often, milk was watered down and mill owners mixed sawdust into their flour to increase their profits. A group of 28 working-class men decided to change things. They raised the funds to set up a co-operative shop that provided good quality products to the community – at a fair price.

Reacting to harsh market realities which they could not control, these 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 democratic, equitable model of doing business is more relevant today than ever before.

Although not the first co-op, The founding principles of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society became the blueprint for the modern co-operative movement. Their story is part of Unicorn's, and we are forever indebted to them.



COOPERATION JACKSON

Ten years building a solidarity economy in Mississippi

Cooperation Jackson is an emerging co-operative network situated firmly within the struggle for Black liberation and self determination in the United States. Its mission is to advance the development of economic democracy in Jackson, Mississippi, the poorest state in the union.

Cooperation Jackson is building a solidarity economy anchored by a network of cooperatives and other types of worker-owned and democratically self-managed enterprises. It's part of a broader struggle in Jackson to democratise Mississippi, rooted in social movements and people's assemblies.

As they celebrate a decade of building power in their communities, they are raising funds to move into the third phase of operations - the development of a number of worker cooperatives in grocery, recycling, construction and more.



Happy birthday to Cooperation Jackson; a deeply inspiring model for economic and ecological transformation. cooperationjackson.org

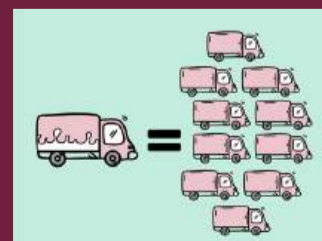
OVERHERD: POWDERED ORGANIC OAT MILK. LIKE A CORDIAL...FOR OATS!



Transporting water around the country (albeit as a component of something else) isn't exactly efficient, so we've trialled a few products where the water's been taken out.

The one that's particularly taken off is Overherd, an organic oat milk in powdered form. It comes in 400g and 800g packs, making 4 litres and 8 litres respectively. It's 10 times lighter than liquid milk, and per 100ml of milk there's only 3g of packaging (compared to 27g for a regular carton). But the best thing about it is that you can make it in whatever quantity you actually need. You literally just add to water, shake & drink! Or stir straight into hot drinks as a creamer.

Lots of folk are using it to replace their regular oat milk, others to take camping, and still others who only use plant milk infrequently and just need a tiny bit at a time. If you drink a lot, it also saves you breaking your back getting it home!



Reduce your food waste... carbon footprint... packaging waste

GLAZEBURY REVISITED

What's been happening with Unicorn's farmland

Does 2008 feel like sixteen years ago to you?! It doesn't to us! That was the year we purchased 21 acres of prime farmland just outside Manchester. (Side note, of our 50 current co-op members, 20 of us were already here then - some a lot longer!)

Always eager to increase the supply of local veg, and keen to preserve agricultural land close to the city - which in recent decades has often moved into other uses like grazing for horses - we purchased land at Glazebury, about 14 miles west of the shop between here and Warrington.

For several years, the land was farmed by a small co-operative of growers and supplied veg to the shop. 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 grid and 60 solar panels, hundreds of metres of native hedging to provide habitat for birds and small mammals, and a compost toilet. For a whole host of reasons however (including scale, lack of worker accommodation, and some unexpected external factors), the business did not prove viable, and it hasn't grown veg for a good few years now. But we do still own the land, and it isn't doing nothing! So here's an update:

THE KINDLING TRUST'S FRUIT TREE NURSERY

In preparation for their own longed-awaited farm (which they finally bagged last year!) our friends at Kindling have been using part of the site as a tree nursery for the past few years.

Already running a thriving urban food hub in Stockport, their ultimate aim was always their own field-scale farm, based around agroforestry - a farming system that integrates trees with crop production.

A few years ago, they started getting ahead by raising trees at Glazebury. By the time they finally purchased their own site, over eight thousand fruit trees had been started off, a thousand of which have already been moved to the Kindling Farm (with more to follow).

Now in their forever home, these trees are forming the bones of Kindling's agroforestry "alley cropping" system. Apple trees are planted in rows running north to south, with a 4 metre pollen and nectar-rich understory around them. In between each row sits a 24 metre-wide veg growing area, the width of which is exactly calculated to match the size of an irrigation "boom" or arm, so that the crops can be watered in one pass without disturbing the trees.

"Working with Unicorn and establishing the fruit tree nursery has meant we could hit the ground running once we purchased our farm. Having 3 year old apple trees ready to be transplanted from Glazebury, just 7 months after moving to the farm, gave us an amazing start. As a result we will have a commercial crop of local organic apples for Unicorn customers 3 years earlier than we might have done!" **Chris, Kindling Trust**

BOOSTING BIODIVERSITY

Right from the start in 2008, we started work to support wildlife, planting hundreds of metres of native hedge plants. Over the years these have needed a fair bit of maintenance. Left to themselves, each plant becomes a tree instead of getting dense and shrubby and interlocking with its neighbours. Trees have their place of course but hedgerows fulfil really specific functions for wildlife, including food and breeding. They also provide a safe way for wildlife to move through the landscape.



To make a hedge become (and stay!) a hedge, you have to "lay" it every few years. This is an ancient countryside art, involving cutting the main stems, bending them down and interweaving them along the hedge line. This fills in the gaps and encourages vigorous vertical growth, making the hedge dense and hedge-like! It's hard & slow work but together we and Kindling have kept the hedges in good shape.

We have two ponds, one of which needed some serious restoration, having previously been filled with bricks and pretty much dried up. During 2021 we cleared and re-planted it and with a few years of growth on the new plants it's looking really healthy. We've also introduced thousands of wildflowers.

We've attempted to support the Willow Tit - a little bird threatened by sharply declining numbers - by installing specialised boxes. Willow Tits already live in the area around Chat Moss and Glazebury (as well as locally in Chorlton and Sale Ees). However they are reluctant to cross bare ground and also won't move more than half a mile from existing territory. As Willow Tits have evolved to excavate their own nest holes in dead timber, they won't use traditional nest boxes. So we've trialled some containing compacted sawdust to allow them to construct their own cavities. No luck as yet, but they do like our scrubby shelterbelt of immature trees and wet areas around the ponds, so we remain hopeful!

As part of the agroforestry project, Kindling also had a barn owl box built in one of our oak trees by the Manchester Raptor Group (raptor is the collective name for all birds of prey like owls, hawks and eagles). The long grass there is home to a large population of short-tailed voles, one of their most common prey. We have had a barn owl wintering in it and last year it was used to raise 2 barn owl chicks! These have been ringed by the Raptor Group so they can be monitored.





Lush pond at Glazebury



Volunteers planting fruit trees raised at Glazebury



Some of our wildflowers



TRAINING GROUND

One of the original growers at Glazebury was Stu, also a co-op member here at Unicorn. Although that business didn't work out, the lessons learned have not gone to waste. Stu is now an active and invaluable Director of the Kindling Farm, supporting them with farming know-how in their quest to pioneer agroforestry in the north west, and to supply Unicorn in the future.

In fact, setting up the nursery at Glazebury gave the whole Kindling team a head start, as Chris describes.

"Not only did it give us a huge financial advantage, but the experience of land management, tree care and conservation has prepared us well for both the design and layout of Kindling Farm, and its ongoing management. Everything from the importance of gateway locations, varieties of trees in the hedges, farm machinery widths, allocation of time to weed management and effective protection for fruit trees... that's just a few of the things we have learnt at Glazebury"

What we do with our land is regularly revisited, but for now Kindling have extended their lease for another 5 years. It's fair to say that the land at Glazebury didn't work out the way we planned. But in terms of our original mission, whatever happens in the future, it's definitely playing its part!

The Kindling Farm is a community-owned farm and relies on people power for everything from fundraising to hedging to biodiversity-building! If you're keen to get stuck in for a day or join one of the action groups, head to kindling.org.uk



Glazebury barn owl being measured



Stu with a newly planted apple

HOPE AT HOME



Over 17,000 survivors of modern slavery were identified in the UK last year. Hope at Home explain how Manchester's spare rooms could become their safe spaces.

"Hope at Home is a charity that trains and supports volunteer hosts across the UK who have a spare bedroom and the goodwill to welcome a survivor into their home for anywhere between 2 weeks and 6 months.

Our hosts are couples, families and single people who care about the marginalised in society and want to help individuals find freedom and a future. We are urgently seeking new hosts across Greater Manchester so that we can offer more safe homes to survivors. If you think you can help, we'd love to hear from you."



If this sounds like something you might want to know more about, head to hopeathome.org.uk or scan the code.



Placement success!

A survivor has a safe home

PUMPKIN CARVING TEMPLATE



HOLLOW OUT YOUR PUMPKIN...
CUT OUT THE BLACK SHAPES...
TAPE THE STENCIL TO YOUR PUMPKIN..
TRACE THE PATTERN ONTO THE PUMPKIN...
CAREFULLY CUT THE SHAPES OUT.
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!