

Up and Running!

New co-ops opened in this past year

BY STUART REID

Eleven new food co-ops have opened since we reported last year, and as always, it's a diverse group. The strong interest in food co-ops in New York City is reflected by two openings, and more are on the way. Larger startups in Durham, N.C. and Portland, Me., benefitted from the expertise of the National Co-op Grocers Development Cooperative. And on a small island off the coast of Seattle, the Orcas Co-op is showing how even a small, remote community can open a food co-op that exceeds expectations.

NEW CO-OP	LOCATION	WEB ADDRESS	OPENED
Our Table Co-op	Sherwood, OR	ourtable.us	Fall 2014
Valley Co-op	Hagerstown, MD	valleycoop.org	Sep. 28, 2014
Marsh River Co-op	Brooks, ME	marshrivercoop.org	Oct. 1, 2014
Arroyo Food Co-op	Altadena, CA	arroyofoodcoop.com	Oct. 25, 2014
Portland Food Co-op	Portland, ME	portlandfoodcoop.org	Nov. 15, 2014
Grain Mill Grocery Co-op	Wake Forest, NC	grainmill.coop	Mar. 10, 2015
Lefferts Community Food Co-op	Brooklyn, NY	leffertsfoodcoop.org	Nov. 23, 2014
Windsor Terrace	Brooklyn, NY	windsorterracefoodcoop@gmail.com	Mar. 21, 2015
Orcas Food Co-op	Eastsound, WA	orcasfood.coop	June 1, 2014
Durham Co+op Market	Durham, NC	durham.coop	Mar. 18, 2015
Gardiner Food Co-op	Gardiner, NY	gardinerfood.coop	May 31, 2015



DURHAM COOP MARKET

Open since	March 18, 2014
Store size	Retail: 8,500 ft ² Gross: 10,000 ft ²
Early sales trend	40-50% above projection
Projected sales	\$5 million
No. of members	At opening: 1,700 Now: 2,200
No. of staff	Full time: 25 Part time: 14
Membership \$	\$100 indiv., \$40 each additional, \$250 bus., \$15 SNAP recipients



Durham Co+op Market (DCM) opened in March with overwhelming support from the community. Commitment, perseverance, and patience pay off! Since 2007, this community has never lost sight of its vision and has been rewarded with a beautiful new store that is exceeding expectations. Sales in the first weeks have been running up to 50% above projections, and 500 new member-owners joined in the first 6 weeks.

Durham Co+op Market contracted with NCG's Development Cooperative for support during their final stages and early operations. Leilah Wolfrum, Durham's general manager, says, "I consider working with the Development Co-op was absolutely essential. They more than made up for the cost by helping us avoid a lot of mistakes."

DCM is located in a food desert, and to make healthy food more available to area residents the co-op offers a \$15 "Food for All" membership and a 10% discount to EBT/SNAP (food assistance) recipients.

WINDSOR TERRACE FOOD CO-OP

Open since	March 21, 2014
Store size	Retail: ft2 Gross: ft2
Early sales trend	\$
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	At opening: Now: 460
No. of staff	Full time: Part time:
Membership \$	\$100 membership fee



In the summer of 2012, Windsor Terrace residents packed into a community meeting, furious that the Brooklyn neighborhood's sole supermarket, Key Food, was being replaced by a giant Walgreens drugstore. One man raised his hand with a suggestion: "Maybe we should start a food co-op."

The Windsor Terrace Co-op will follow the Park Slope model. Members will be required to work a set amount of hours a month, and only members will be able to shop there.

The Windsor Terrace Co-op is expecting that the same demographic that has driven the co-ops in other NYC neighborhoods will make up the core of its membership.

Jack O'Connell, who had lived in the area since 1985, said he liked the idea of affordable organic produce, but saw the opportunity for something bigger. "This is a community-building experience where food is the vehicle," he said, "rather than a food experience with the community building as the vehicle."

VALLEY CO-OP

Open since	September 28, 2014
Store size	Retail: 850ft2 Gross: 1,500ft2
Early sales trend	\$
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	At opening: 155 Now: 329
No. of staff	Full time: 2 Part time: 6
Membership \$	\$35 membership fee



The Valley Co-op, located in southeast Washington County, Md., has walked a 5-year path that has been quite unconventional. Valley Co-op began operations as a buying club in April 2010, delivering food biweekly out of successively larger spaces generously lent to them. After 4 years of growth (250+ families), they were forced to choose between ceasing operations or renting store space of their own, and chose the latter path.

In the year they have been in the store, their numbers have grown to over 700 families. An impressive 69 percent of their sales are from local suppliers.

The transition from buying club to storefront has not always been easy, and the core team has put in long hours with limited resources. Now they are focusing on figuring out how to transition into a "far more than a store" cooperative model and educate their community about what they can be.

MARSH RIVER CO-OP

Open since	October 25, 2014
Store size	Retail: 4,000 ft2 Gross: 4,900 ft2
Early sales trend	40% below projection, but rising
Projected sales	\$500,000
No. of members	At opening: 693 Now: 810
No. of staff	Full time: Part time:
Membership \$	Individuals \$100 equity, \$15 annual fee, Family \$150 equity, \$15 annual fee, Producer \$100 equity, \$15 annual fee + min. 12 hours/mo. volunteering



The Marsh River Co-op is located in tiny Brooks, Me., with a population of only 1,078. Members form the backbone of the co-op, both by investing financially through share purchases and by volunteering time to help the co-op thrive. Marsh

River Co-op is one of a handful of hybrid ownership co-ops with both consumer and producer classes. Consumer owners receive a minimum 5 percent discount on (most) in-store products and the potential for patronage refunds. Volunteer workers receive an additional 10 percent discount.

Producer members are persons (or entities) who reside within a 10-mile radius of the Marsh River Cooperative and who undergo a juried review process to become members of the cooperative in order to provide goods for sale at the cooperative.

Producer members volunteer a minimum of 12 hours per month at the co-op, and receive full membership benefits. The co-op will purchase goods for sale in the store first from producer members before seeking other sources. Producer members are also given priority "real estate" in the store for sale of their consignment craft items.

ARROYO FOOD CO-OP

Open since	October 25, 2014
Store size	Retail: ft2 Gross: ft2
Early sales trend	\$
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	At opening: Now:
No. of staff	Full time: Part time:
Membership \$	\$300



The Arroyo Food Co-op started as a community project in late 2009, gathering together people in the Altadena and Pasadena communities who wanted a place to purchase local, sustainable, and organic foods in their neighborhood. Early sales

at the store are well below the goal needed for long-term sustainability; however, that is likely to improve when the co-op is able to sell produce and bulk items. The Arroyo Co-op is in conversation with the Pasadena Public Health Department to clear hurdles so that they can start selling fresh organic produce and bulk bin items.

Joy Lam, Arroyo's general manager, says, "Our mission is to make local sustainable food available and actively participate in community building. To do that, we collaborate with many like-minded local organizations. For instance, Transition Pasadena helped us to create and maintain the free food garden outside of our co-op. We partner with Muir Ranch CSA (community-supported-agriculture) program to support a local farming/business training program at our local high school. We also actively look out for local artisan food and cottage food producers and make the co-op a friendly place to sell their products."



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PORTLAND CO-OP

Open since	November 15, 2014
Store size	Retail: 3,500 ft ² Gross: 5,000 ft ²
Early sales trend	45% above projections
Projected sales	\$2.2M (now at \$3.2M pace)
No. of members	At opening: 2078 Now: 3200
No. of staff	Full time: 25 Part time:
Membership \$	\$100 membership fee
Startup budget	\$1.6 million



The momentum for the Portland Food Co-op started in the spring of 2006. In reaction to the closure of a locally-owned natural food grocery in Portland, community leadership decided to create a cooperative grocery.

In 2008, the co-op created an all-volunteer buying club operation, branded "Food Now," to provide access to food until a store could be opened. The "Food Now" operation eventually expanded to about \$200,000 in annual sales (of which about 60 percent were local foods and products), with 150 member-owners volunteering for work shifts. The development of the retail storefront stayed on the back burner until 2012. After that, everything started coming together. Over 2,000 community members joined the co-op, they found a great site, and the co-op's capital campaign raised the \$1.6 million needed to open the store. Portland Food Co-op also contracted with NCG's Development Cooperative for implementation and post-opening support.

GRAIN MILL GROCERY CO-OP

Open since	March 10, 2015
Store size	Retail: 1,500 ft ² Gross: 2,100 ft ²
Early sales trend	\$250,000
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	At opening: 390 Now: 600
No. of staff	Full time: 2 Part time: 3
Membership \$	\$25 annual (family) \$25 student/retiree/military



In Wake Forest, N.C., the Grain Mill Grocery Cooperative originally opened in June 2010 as a resource for local whole grain bakers called The Grain Mill of Wake Forest.

On March 10, 2015, with the financial and volunteer assistance of their first 390 member owners, the co-op opened its interim location, a 2100-square-foot launch pad towards creating the final vision of 8,000—10,000 square feet of cooperative community grocery shopping. Member benefits include 5 percent reward on in-store purchases and 10 percent off website bulk purchases.

GARDINER FOOD CO-OP & CAFE

Open since	June 1, 2014
Store size	Retail: 2,200 ft ² Gross: ft ²
Early sales trend	\$
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	At opening: Now:
No. of staff	Full time: Part time:
Membership \$	\$100



The Gardiner Co-op & Cafe project evolved from the nonprofit Kennebec Local Food Initiative, whose mission is "to grow the edible economy in the greater Gardiner, N.Y., area."

The Gardiner Food Co-op & Cafe was awarded a \$90,000 Community Development Block Grant, which was used to provide working capital and to acquire much needed equipment for the storefront. About a fourth of the 2100-square-foot storefront is used for the café, and the remainder for groceries. It's a welcoming space for the community to shop and gather.

ORCAS FOOD CO-OP

Open since	June 1, 2014
Store size	Retail: 2,100 ft ² Gross: 4,200 ft ²
Early sales trend	\$1.9M 2014, above projections
Projected sales	\$ 2.2M in 2015
No. of members	At opening: 600 Now: 931
No. of staff	23
Membership \$	\$240



The Orcas Food Co-op is in the San Juan Islands, north of Seattle and only a stone's throw from British Columbia. What at first glance might seem to be an unlikely place for a successful co-op has become an inspiring example of a community embracing their new store.

Learner Limbach, general manager at Orcas, puts it well: "One of the biggest priorities for us as a co-op is to create a sustainable local food system with strong regional connections. In just our first year of operation we have become the single largest buyer of local farm products in San Juan County, just recently surpassing \$100K in direct purchases. Our member-owners, who consist of greater than 25 percent of Orcas residents, know that when they shop at the co-op they are participating in not only a great place to buy their groceries; they are contributing to a shift toward greater sustainability and resilience for our community and food system as a whole. The consistent dedication to these values throughout the entire organization from the get-go has been a huge key to success for our co-op thus far, and we feel it's just the tip of the iceberg."



LEFFERTS COMMUNITY FOOD COOPERATIVE

Open since	November 23, 2014
Store size	Retail: ft2 Gross: 900 ft2
Early sales trend	\$
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	At opening: 80 Now: 212
No. of staff	Full time: Part time:
Membership \$	\$100, \$25 for low income 2 hours 45 min. work/month



Lefferts Community Food Co-op opened after five years of planning at 324 Empire Blvd. in Brooklyn, N.Y., and is currently open two days a week. The co-op is modeled after the Park Slope Co-op, and only members can shop at the store. Members contribute 2.75 hours of labor per month as part of their member-owner commitment.

The core group of organizers moved to open the shop before they had many members, under the belief that if they built it, the members would come. "Space is the largest issue in New York," said Karen Oh, who started the Lefferts Co-op. She found a "super-generous" landlord who required minimal rent, and then had a "Field of Dreams moment."

"People like to shop locally," said Oh, an organizer and former Park Slope cooperator. "Not in a trendy way. They just like to put money and resources into their own neighborhood."

The co-op is currently open to members on Thursdays from 4 p.m.–8:30 p.m. and on Sundays from 11 a.m.–6 p.m. To join, members pay a \$25 fee and a refundable \$25–\$100 investment sum, and pledge to work a 2-hours-and-45-minutes shift every month. The model is based on the member-worker approach of the Park Slope co-op.

OUR TABLE COOPERATIVE

Open since	November 9, 2014
Store size	Retail: 800 ft2 + commercial kitchen
Early sales trend	Near targets, \$5,000/week
Projected sales	\$
No. of members	100 consumer, 4 worker, 11 proba- tionary producers
No. of staff	Full time: 3 Part time: 2
Membership \$	\$150 consumer; \$500 workers, increasing by \$500/year



Our Table is "a regional cooperative creating handcrafted, thoughtful and delicious food"—a unique entry in this year's new food co-ops. The co-op has three membership classes: worker members from the farm, producer members from the region, and consumer members. The retail operation is essentially a farmstand with additional inventory to round out the mix. The co-op partners with two other businesses to create an integrated system: Community by Design, LLC, owns "Our Farm" and holds it as a land trust. The Manav Foundation is a nonprofit 501c3 organization that provides outreach and education, using Our Farm as a classroom.