

Food Co-op Love



Bulletin of the Australian Student Environment Network

Food Co-op Crew

Food co-ops have been workin' away for years, creating beautiful communities around food across Australia. But we've been isolated in our little co-ops for too long – we've got skills, resources, ideas, tips, and co-op love to share! In January 2006, at the ASEN Training Camp, a bunch of us created ze ASEN Food Coop working group!

The Food Co-op working group is a national network of food cooperatives based on universities throughout Australia. Working together we hope to share resources, information and ideas that assist us in maintaining valuable food co-operatives and catalysing the creation of new food co-operatives. We have a email list to help us with staying in the loop with what everyone is up to and sharing info, stories and resources. We are also producing a regular publication to share information with students about sustainable and co-operative practices. In 2008, we aim to ensure the importance of food co-operatives on campus is recognised,

ensuring they have a place in the university communities post the introduction of the neoliberal anti-student organising legislation (VSU). There are also plans for regular phone link ups, food coop crawls, fact sheets, recipe swapping, food related workshops at the Students of Sustainability Conference in Perth this year, yummy co-op cook ups and more!

With our co-ops, we aim to promote a more interactive community space and develop individual empowerment. Universities are institutions where many young people can be challenged and guided towards occupations and participation in broader communities. If we put a food co-op inside of a university, give it a little shake, roll it and stick it together, we're likely to get an 'oh so lovely' duo that will stimulate, question, inspire and help one and all who enter. Get in touch – we'd love to hear about your co-op or buying group, lend a bit o' support in helping you in set one up, and keep building food co-op communities!

Food Co-op Crawl - Touring Sydney Food Co-ops

A while back, Monika conjured up a brilliant idea- living in a city blessed with six food co-ops, why should we confine ourselves to the one or two we frequent? With great new things to see, we set off on a co-op crawl. Although every other day that week had been gloriously sunny, Friday in early June started off rainy and stayed grey all day. But the hardcore few were not deterred; Sev and Mel from Pedal Australia for Clean Energy, Rodney from both of the Newcastle co-ops, Monika from Thoughtful Foods, and Ben the tag-along vagabond put on our rain coats and headed out in search of adventure, knowledge, chocolate, and foods our home co-ops didn't have.

The excursion started at the University of New South Wales' Thoughtful Foods with tea and yummy snacks. From there, our biking crew five strong set off for Sydney Uni, and then down the road to Alfalfa House in Newtown. We soaked up the atmosphere of Sydney's oldest food co-op and provisioned for lunch, which we enjoyed in a nearby park.

After lunch, we lost two cyclists, and picked up Shanu, seeking helpful knowledge for starting up a food co-op at the University of Western Sydney. We enjoyed the snacks Amy (who we just missed) left for us at the UTS co-op, and headed down to catch a ferry out to our fifth and final stop of the day- the Manly Food Co-op. The ferry ride over was a great part of the trip, and Billy at Manly was able to explain how their co-op functioned and provided answers to our barrage of questions. It was good to see the variety of university co-ops as well as two of Sydney's community co-ops, and although they all stocked brown rice and most stocked spelt flour, I was intrigued to learn about the differences in operation, layout, location, feel, and stock (especially Alfalfa's chocolate covered macadamia nuts). By the time we made it back to Sydney, we were all exhausted after a satisfying day of cycling, learning, exploring, and snacking.

Besides being the first of a kind, weather, assignments and exams left the attendance somewhat low, but we had a great time regardless. September 2006 saw the second food co-op crawl take place - amazing people, sunshine and a nice

breeze, great conversations and of course lotsa yummy food. It involved around 20 crew (including 14 cyclists J) from eight different coops around the greater Sydney and Newcastle area. We enjoyed a tour of the back room at Alfalfa House as well as the opportunity to ask questions, compare the way different ways co-ops do things and why and ended the day at an organic café in Manly making plans to turn ideas into actions.

We originally decided to cycle to make the co-op crawl as sustainable, reduce fuel dependence with its associated greenhouse gas emissions and do it in way that was consistent with the type of world we're trying to create. It also unexpectedly highlighted just how close together we all are to the community food co-ops we visited. After all, if you can cycle to all three of the inner city uni-based co-op and Alfalfa House in one morning, what excuse is there for not working together, talking and sharing resources? The surprise result was the beginning of both uni and community based co-ops (rather than just uni-based co-ops) cooperating – beginning to set up system for getting more farmer-direct organicveggies together (its nowhere near the amazing FoodConnect Community Supported Agriculture project yet but its something to aim for!), sharing product and supplier lists, recipes and fact sheets as well as the occasional piggyback order so that smaller co-ops don't have the problem of not being able to make minimum order!

Keep your ear to the ground for murmurings of this semester's crawl (hopefully there'll be one in both Sydney and Melbourne this time!) - it's bound to be a blast. Or contact the ASEN food co-op working group on info@asen.org.au. There's also a map at <http://www.bikely.com/maps/bike-path/> Sydney-Food-Coop-Tour if you can't wait until then.



What goes on at a food co-op?

Because it's a co-operative, it does whatever its members want! A co-op can support ecological values and sustainability in our universities by providing things that get forgotten on many a campus, such as:

- o A healthy food option on campus through cafés and at home through bulk food and veggie boxes
- o Safe food for vegetarians, vegans, and gluten- and milk allergy sufferers
- o Saving students money with well-priced healthy food, and offering food credit or discounts to unwaged or income stressed students in return for work
- o Students helping students as a service, not a business
- o A point of contact for activists for social justice and the environment; an introduction for many to environmental and social awareness
- o Education about food security issues like Fair Trade and organic agriculture
- o (free!) Training in cooking, safe food handling and administration
- o A source of green waste to turn into compost for a school garden

What else does your co-op do to improve life on campus and around the world?

What are food co-ops?

Food co-ops consist of a group of people (members) cooperating to take back control of their food. They are often largely or entirely volunteer run and provide a not for profit, ethical alternative to supermarkets. By taking into consideration how & where it is produced & under what conditions, food co-ops provide accessible, affordable environmentally, socially & ethically responsible food & household products. They are about providing food that doesn't cost the earth and food for people not for profit.

How do food co-ops work?

Food co-ops stock a range of products bought according to their buying principles & factors. They are open to community, staff, students & members and generally stock a variety of bulk, minimally packaged products. They are firmly grounded in an ethic of avoid, refuse, reduce, reuse and then recycle. For example, members are strongly encouraged to bring their own containers to fill with goodies. Food co-ops also aim to engage people with their food, by for instance weighing out and pricing and encouraging people to think about where their food comes from, how it is produced and under what conditions etc.

Buying Principles and Factors

Buying principles and factors do vary between individual food co-ops but may include consideration of things such:

Is it:

- * Organic?
- * Biodynamic?
- * Chemical free?
- * GE free?
- * Irradiation free?
- * Fairtrade?
- * Vegan or vegetarian?
- * Cruelty free?
- * Farmer-direct?
- * In season?
- * Available?
- * Minimally packed and bulk?
- * Ethically produced?
- * As local as possible?
- * Community Supported Agriculture?
- * Wholefood ? (not processed)
- * What supplier are you buying it from?
- * What are the food miles - where was it produced and how far did it travel?
- * Who produced it?
 - * Is it a reasonable price?
 - * Does it have a social/community component?



BEET THE SYSTEM

So Where are all the Food Co-ops in Oz?

Campus or Uni based Food Co-ops

NSW & ACT

* The Broadway Food Co-op (also known as the UTS Food Co-op) located on Level 2 of the Tower Building at UTS, opposite the lifts. Phone 02 9514 1418, fax 02 9514 1157, www.sustainability.uts.edu.au/foodcoop/foodcoop.html

* The Sydney Uni Co-op, (also known as the Sydney Students Food Co-op) located in Level 4 of the Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, Phone 02 9660 5222

* Thoughtful Foods, the UNSW Food Co-op which was previously known as Pigweed. Located in the backyard of the Roundhouse, behind Eats@the Round as you head towards the Lifestyle Centre (Uni-gym) on Lower Campus. Phone 02 9385 6097, www.thoughtfulfoods.unsw.edu.au.

* Happy Bellies at the University of Wollongong, just next to the Student Association, looking out onto the duckpond between the SRC and Security Office.. happybellies@yahoo.com

* Sustenance at the University of Newcastle, located near NUSA (Newcastle University Student Association) <http://www.nusa.org.au/cms/sustenance>

* Better Health Food Co-op (Also known as Seasons Food Co-op or the UWS Food Co-op) Earthcare Building, Hawkesbury Campus, University of Western Sydney www.seasons.unssa.org.au

* Macquarie Uni has a food co-op working group

* Australian National University Food Co-op, (ANU Food Co-op) located in Cnr Kingsley Street & Barry Drive, Action ACT 2601 Phone 02 6257 1186, fax 02 6262 9311, www.anu.foodco-op.com

QLD

* Hot Banana (Griffith Uni Food Co-op) Community Centre, Griffith Uni Nathan Campus Phone 07 3735 7603 www.hotbanana.org

* James Cook University in Townsville: organic veggie box buying group, ask at the James Cook University student association, <http://www.jcu.edu.au/studentassoc/enviro/organic.html>

* University of Queensland Food Co-op (the UQ Food Co-op) is in the process of starting up!

VIC

* Organarchy (also known as the RMIT Food Co-op), Level 4, Building 8, RMIT, Phone 03 9925 9791 foodcoop@rmit.edu.au

* Wholefoods, is a non-hierarchical café, restaurant and grocery and the Monash Uni (Clayton) Food Co-op does organic veggie boxes

* The Melbourne Uni Food Co-operative. Located on the 1stst Floor, Union House, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Phone 03 9347 8716. yourfoodcoop@gmail.com, www.musu.org.au/environment/env0504.html

* La Trobe Food Co-op and Wholefood Café In the Agora, Bundoora campus, Melbourne 03 9479 1525 1111 is trying to restart after being closed down

SA

* Flinders Uni Organic Food Co-op – happens just outside the front of Wholefoods store

* Adelaide Uni Magill Campus Food Co-op has just started up

WA

* Murdoch Uni Food Co-op is starting up at the moment

TASSIE

* UTas Food Co-op is starting up as part of a new sustainability centre on the Hobart campus very soon!

NT

* Planet Organic Darwin (Charles Darwin University Food Co-op) Building 31, Casuarina Campus, Darwin NT (08) 8946 7736

So where are all the Food Co-ops in Oz?

This is a work in progress -please help us make this a more comprehensive resource!

The ASEN Food Co-op Working Group is in the process of putting

together a list of all the Food Co-ops in Australia. This is what we know so far – apologies if your food co-op has been missed&/or some of the details are incorrect. If we've left your food co-op off the list, or you have some more details &/or info to give us please let Monika know (willhof@yahoo.com, 0414 901 276) so we can update the list.

Community based Food Co-ops

SYDNEY & NSW

* Alfalfa House Food Co-op (Sydney's oldest food co-op) at 113 Enmore Road, Enmore (just opposite the Enmore Theatre), phone 02 9519 3374, fax 02 9565 5053 www.alfalfahouse.org,

* Manly Food Co-op, at 21 Whistler St, Manly, phone 02 4782 5890 or 02 9977 0177

* The Green Tucker Box at 5/51 Arthur Str, Forestville, www.greentucker.org.au, Phone 02 9453 1133 or 02 99770 9241

* Beanstalk Organic Food Co-op in Newcastle www.beanstalk.org.au/index2.html, Distribution Centre is at Albert Str, Wickham (Croatian Club), Phone 0423 654 316

* Blue Mountains Food Co-op in Katoomba is located in Shop 1-2 HaPenny Lane under the PostOffice shop, Katoomba, phone 02 4782 5890, www.bluemtnsfood.asn.au

* Angophora Food Co-op in the Blue Mountains

* Armidale Food Co-op 160 Rusden Str, Armidale, phone 02 6772 5445, www.armidalfoodco-op.org/index.html

* The Bangalay Tree (Ulladulla Food Co-op) is in the process of starting up in the Illawara north of Wollongong, possibly in Ulladulla. thebangalaytree.org, food@thebangalaytree.org

* The Queanbeyan Food Co-op located in the Schools as Community Centres building on the grounds of Queanbeyan Public School, Isabella St. gbnfoodcoop@hotmail.com , 02 6297 9046

* Jura Books Food Co-op Phone: 02 9550 9931440 Parramatta Rd Petersham NSW 2049

MELBOURNE & VIC

* Friends of the Earth Food Co-op in Melbourne, 312 Smith Str, Collingwood, phone 03 9419 8700, www.foe.org.au/campaigns/foodcoop/foodcoop.html

* St Kilda Organic Food Co-op in Port Phillip

* Warrnambool Co-operative Society, 259 Timor Str. Warrnambool, phone 03 5561 9500

* Wholefood Co-op in Geelong at McLarty Pl. Geelong, Phone 03 5221 5421

* Healsville Food Co-op www.healsvillefoodco-op.com almost closed down but now in the process of rebuilding

* Moreland Veggie Co-op. morelandveggieco-op@gmail.com

CAIRNS & QLD

* Community Foods in Cairns, located at 74 Shields St Cairns, Phone no. 07 4041 5335 , www.comfoods.org.au PO Box 7483 Grafton

* Maple Str Food Co-op in Maleny which has many co-ops including a food co-op at 37 Maple Str, Maleny, 07 5494 2088 www.maplestreefco-op.com.au,

ADELAIDE & SA

* Goodwood Waste Not Want Not Co-op in Clarence Park, 107 Goodwood Road, <http://www.thegreendirectory.com.au/eco-friendly-clients/WasteNot-WantNot/The-Waste-Not-Want-Not-Shop.html>

* Clarence Park Food Co-op, corner East Ave and Canterbury Tce, Blackforest, phone 05 8292 8166 or 05 8297 6240

* Inner Southern Food Co-op

HOBART & TASSIE

* Hobart Organic Co-op located in the back of the Resistance Centre, Hobart

PERTH AND WA

* Lockridge Food Co-op A new food co-op is hopefully starting up in Lockridge, a low income area in Perth

Links for further info

Agricultural Biotech Info Net www.biotech-info.net
Australian Community Foods www.communityfoods.com.au
Australian Consumers Association www.choice.com.au
Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN) www.asen.org.au
ASEN Food Co-op Working Group www.asen.org.au/index.php?p=campaign_food_coop

Biological Farmers of Australia www.bfa.com.au
Clean Food Guide www.cleanfood.com.au
Co-op Crawl Map (for Sydney) www.bikely.com/maps/bike-path/Sydney-Food-Coop-Tour
Co-operative Federation of Victoria www.australia.coop
European Food Irradiation Campaign www.irradiation.info/
Farming solutions for the 3rd world www.farmingsolutions.org
Food First www.foodfirst.org
Food Standards Australia New Zealand www.foodstandards.gov.au
Foundation for Local Food Initiatives - U.K. www.localfood.co.uk
Friends of the Earth Australia www.foe.org.au
Friends of the Earth Europe Biotechnology Program www.foeeurope.org/biotechnology and Food and Farming Campaign www.choosefoodchoosefarming.org
Friends of the Earth International GMO Campaign

www.foei.org/gmo/index.html
Friends of the Earth UK Real Food Campaign www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/realfoods
GeneEthics Network www.geneethics.org

GRAIN-Genetic Resources Action International www.grain.org
Grassroots Action for Food and Farming www.gaff.org.uk
Greenpeace True Foods Campaign www.greenpeace.com.au/truefood/index2.html
Irradiation Watch www.foodirradiationinfo.org
Nanotechnology www.nano.foe.org.au/node/98

Local Harvest - USA www.localharvest.org
Organic Consumers US www.purefood.org
Organic Federation of Australia www.ofa.org.au
Organic Food & Farmers Markets www.organicfoodmarkets.com.au and the Organic Traders' and Consumers' Network www.octanet.com.au
Seed Savers Network www.seedsavers.net
South Australian Genetic Food Information Network homepages.picknowl.com.au/

Store Wars! (short film) www.StoreWars.org
Sustain www.sustain-web.org
True Food Network www.truefoodnow.org
The Food Commission www.foodcomm.org.uk
The Meatrix (short films) www.themeatrix.com
Union of Concerned Farmers www.non-gm-farmers.com

Contacts to get involved

Jarra
Jarra@asen.org.au
~for more information of to join the e-list

Or go to
www.asen.org.au

Your local food co-op is:

Contact:

