

SOUND CONSUMER

See what's new in PCC standards

One of PCC's defining qualities is high standards.

Longtime shoppers know, for instance, that the co-op prioritizes organic foods and bans many additives and chemicals.

Now, in a significant new project, PCC has re-examined every standard, adding specific details and requirements that back up each policy, along with updating older policies and scheduling new reviews. This systematic approach also adds details on the goals of each standard, the reasoning behind its requirements, and where any difficulties or potential gaps might remain.

It's a rare advancement for an industry where many retailers present their guidelines in broad generalities rather than comprehensive rules.

"Not many grocers have publicly available standards that are focused on sustainability, and setting criteria for health, environmental benefits, animal welfare, toxics concerns," said Rebecca Robinson, PCC's senior product sustainability specialist.

The documents are available on PCC's website at pccmarkets.com/r/5944.

"The main goal and purpose was to articulate what we're doing and what our merchandisers do," Robinson said.

In years past, standards might have stated overall policies or general expectations of producers, but not drilled down into specifics. Merchandisers spent a great deal of time assessing ingredients and trying to make sure new products met the spirit of the guidelines as well as the letter. "Our merchandisers have done a great job...they have really made sure our products reflect what our customers expect, and they have been great at gatekeeping and trying to figure out what the best of each category might be," Robinson said.

The new work added "getting behind the scenes of our current standards to understand the intent, and then establish clear boundaries, requirements and guidelines that are reflective of the goal but much less subjective."

For instance, PCC's animal welfare standards don't allow fresh meat and pork products in the stores if they were produced by farmers who confined animals in gestation crates, severely limiting the animals' movements. But the guidelines didn't detail whether those requirements also applied to some processed meats like raw sausages.

"When you don't have something that's clearly articulated...that leaves it up to interpretation, and just makes the job harder for merchandisers," Robinson said. The updated standard clearly outlines the scope of products it applies to and specifies that raw sausages are covered by the same requirements.

What does that mean?

Sometimes the changes meant adding information. PCC's standards say the co-op prioritizes sustainable beers and wines, for instance. Robinson reached out to merchandiser Jeff Cox to ask what that looks like in practice, given that alcohol is governed by different laws than food, and PCC cannot legally require some of the same disclosures.

"Jeff ran through (examples) like, we look for wines that are made with organically grown grapes or have some sort of regenerative agriculture certification—biodynamic is a big one in wine. We try to look for local vineyards, or products where the winery owns the fields where the grapes are grown and bottle them so they have more control over the supply chain. And, we encourage companies to be transparent in their ingredients and not to add artificial dyes or flavors," Robinson said.

The standards also reflect research into complex situations like the palm oil industry. Many people ask if palm oil, an ingredient present in roughly half of U.S. consumer products, should be banned from products, but it is not inherently unsustainable. "It's just that the current, common, large-scale methods of growing and harvesting it are incredibly destructive," Robinson said.

When produced through better methods, palm has the potential to be one of the more sustainable oils available. It actually is a high-yield, versatile product and could potentially have a lower carbon

Why are these substances on these lists? What's the reasoning behind these lists?

footprint than some other oils since it's harvested from fruiting trees rather than annual crops.

PCC's palm oil standard focuses on supporting sustainably produced palm oil and includes the requirement that palm-derived products used in PCC-made deli, bakery or private label products be sourced through Palm Done Right, a label that includes fair labor certification, organic certification and Non-GMO Project Verification. (In the event of supply chain shortages or lack of commercial availability for Palm Done Right products, the standard allows for substituting palm oil certified by the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil organization or to work with Palm Done Right's parent organization to find other suitable alternatives.)

Asking "why?"

Developing the standards for food ingredients, supplements and medicines, and

personal care products was a significant step forward even more than the other categories. It's advanced from a process that started when the co-op was much smaller and relied on simple lists of banned substances. "For these standards, it was about looking at the prohibited ingredients list and asking, 'Why are these substances on these lists? What's the reasoning behind these lists?'" Robinson said.

"Now the reasons are defined, like, 'These chemicals are banned because we don't allow artificial preservatives or fragrances,' or 'We're trying to get away from petroleum-derived chemicals as much as possible because all those things are very harmful to human health,'" she said.

Those guidelines also make it easier to assess new formulations or chemicals that PCC's standards committee hasn't yet reviewed. For instance, several specific chemicals are banned in health and body care products because they go through a process called ethoxylation that can contaminate the product with carcinogens. The new standard clarifies that no substances that go through ethoxylation are allowed.

Standards require delicately balancing co-op goals. In some cases, advocates would ideally like to add extra requirements for environmental or sustainability purposes, but there aren't yet enough producers to meet the requirements. In others, tightening the guidelines would price a product out of shoppers' range, or lock out smaller farmers and manufacturers.

However, "there are some categories or products where we can specify prohibited ingredients, practices, or that products sold must have certain certifications."

For instance, PCC requires that our compost and soil amendments be certified for use in organic agriculture by trusted



Illustration by Wendy Wahman

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Visit pccmarkets.com for current store hours and more information.

[LETTERS to the editor]

Letters to the Sound Consumer editor can be emailed to editor@pccmarkets.com. Submission of letter grants automatic approval of publication to PCC, including name, in print and online. Submission does not guarantee publication. PCC reserves the right to edit content of submissions.

CHICKEN WELFARE CONCERNS

Hello! I have grown increasingly distressed about animal cruelty in this country's factory farming system. It is difficult to source humanely raised chicken in our area, and I'm wondering if PCC shares this concern. Is your poultry sustainably, humanely raised? If yes, what is the source and the farm?

Thanks very much; I am a member.
— Hollis

I recently bought a whole "Organic Air-Chilled Whole Fryer raised by Pitman Farms to meet PCC Standards." What I would like to know is what are "PCC Standards"? I watched a New York Times video on chicken farming, which was disturbing, and I realized I don't know how chickens sold at PCC are raised.

Thank you,
— David Crocker

PCC replies: Thank you for reaching out with your concerns regarding the welfare of chickens sold at PCC. We are guessing that you saw a recent video from The New York Times about industrial chicken farming, which highlighted the animal welfare and environmental costs of raising cheap poultry.

PCC has high standards for the vendors who supply our chicken. We require outdoor access for birds and enough space for them to engage in their natural behaviors. PCC sends out annual checklists to gather information about vendor practices and to ensure they are meeting our standards. Additionally, we are currently working on a significant update to our animal welfare standards, which will provide more detail and clarity on how we expect producers to raise and treat their birds. You can read PCC's animal welfare standards at pccmarkets.com/r/6115. And we encourage you to check back in a few months for the updated version on that page.

PCC's Private Label (PL) chickens are raised, slaughtered, processed and packaged by Pitman Farms (Mary's Chicken is their brand name). They are pioneers in larger scale, humanely raised chickens and have made significant investments to ensure birds are raised in healthy and safe facilities, including consulting with Temple Grandin and individuals from PETA to help accomplish that goal. The majority of Mary's Chicken receives a Global Animal Partnership (GAP) level 3 rating (including PCC's PL organic chickens) because that is what the market supports, providing the best animal welfare while being able to still offer a reasonably priced product. Additionally, Pitman Farms raises birds that are slower growing, which has enormous benefits to the bird's welfare. You can learn more about Pitman Farm's standards at pccmarkets.com/r/6150.

While Pitman Farms is our main supplier, we do have some chicken from Draper Valley, which is owned by Purdue. We also require them to submit checklists to ensure they meet our animal welfare standards.

PCC cares deeply about the welfare of animals and we continue to improve our standards and the products on our shelves. Our meat and seafood merchandiser is actively working to establish more relationships with smaller, local poultry farmers that are committed to raising chickens humanely.

Thank you again for reaching out with your concerns as it helps us understand what our shoppers and members care about.

TURMERIC TESTING

I was reading a story about lead contamination in turmeric affecting some families in the Seattle area. We always buy our turmeric from PCC, but the story made me wonder how much is known about the supply chain for turmeric and other spices PCC sells in the bulk section. Is product testing built into the supply chain?

— Satish

PCC replies: Thank you for reaching out with your concerns over heavy metal contamination in spices, specifically lead in turmeric. This is an issue PCC has been tracking for a number of years and we share your concerns. Heavy metals find their way into food because they're naturally occurring in trace amounts or because the soil or water is contaminated where the plants are grown.

At PCC, we source the majority of our spices from Frontier Co-op, because they have extremely high standards and conduct thorough internal testing for heavy metals and other contaminants. In addition to vetting their suppliers carefully and requiring organic certification, they conduct their own heavy metal analysis to test for lead, cadmium and arsenic using equipment that can obtain precise results at the parts per million level or lower. Frontier requires all their herbs and spices to contain less than 1 part per million of lead.

The Simply Organic brand, which is owned by Frontier Co-op, was tested by Consumer Reports and except for some concern with oregano, all of the samples from the brand returned with no concern of heavy metal contamination. While heavy metal contamination is always a potential risk in food and water, we are confident that Frontier Co-op has the strictest standards to safeguard against high levels of heavy metals in their products.

SEED STORY

Your March article on "Living and Farming in the World's Seed Bank" was a very interesting story. My dad's first cousins, the Leckenbys, had a seed company in the Mount Vernon area. After World War II, the Leckenbys sent a lot of seeds to China, according to a newspaper story I ran across. I now have an appreciation of how special these seeds are, and how few places they can be grown successfully. I found a reference to the company, with information about what they used to sell, at this website of historic seed catalogues: pccmarkets.com/r/6114. What would be very fascinating to know is the impact the seeds had in China.

— Stuart Jenner

PCC replies: Thank you for reading and for adding more information about our region's history!

RECEIPT QUESTIONS

My wife and I recently became members. Our cashier was nice enough to let us know we can apply our most recent purchase toward our dividend. We were directed to apply online via the address on our receipt. I don't see a way on the website to add that transaction to my membership purchase history. I was also wondering if I can add this receipt to my compost pile.

PCC replies: Thank you for writing. At PCC, our policy is that receipts can be applied as of the first day of membership. For example, if someone purchases a membership on June 1, only purchases made that day and afterward can be added to a membership. (Changes to receipts, e.g. returning an item, adding membership to transaction, etc. are

valid for 30 days. If you would like to return a perishable item or a health and body care product we do also require a receipt.)

As for the physical receipt, we have talked to our composting partner, Cedar Grove Composting Inc., and it is unfortunately unable to compost our receipts.

RECIPE REQUESTS

I have a few questions about the items in your deli. I just love your Tiger Mountain Chili and would like to have the recipe—can you share the recipes for deli items? Also, I'm wondering if I can have the nutritional information for a few of my most purchased items, like the Chicken Verde Burrito.

PCC replies: Thank you for your questions about deli item recipes and nutritional information. We would be happy to provide you with as much information as we can. We can certainly provide a recipe to you, but they do often have large batch sizes so they will need to be scaled down a bit for your personal use. We also have a wide variety of delicious recipes on our website, pccmarkets.com/r/6111. These won't be items you can find in-store but are wonderful dishes you could make with PCC ingredients. As for nutritional information we do have some items listed on our website, pccmarkets.com/r/6112, but if you are unable to find it there, just reach out to us through our contact page and we will be able to find it for you.

SPECIAL ORDERS

I was just online, and I realized one of my favorite vegan cheeses, from Miyoko's, comes in multiple other flavor options! Of course, I would love if you could stock their other varieties of cheese, but if not, is there a way I could order them?

PCC replies: Thanks so much for writing in with this product recommendation and question about special ordering. Firstly, thank you for your suggestion for additional flavors. We have shared this request with our Merchandising team, and they will consider it when they next review this section. Secondly, we are always happy to help you with special ordering. We organize all special orders through the stores, either in-person or over the phone. Any employee from the relevant department or your cashier will be able to fill out a special-order form with you. We will order the product if it is available to us and call you when it has arrived. Some special orders do require you to purchase the whole case of the item, but when you do purchase the whole case, you will receive 10% off the normal retail price. Let us know if you have any additional questions!

DIVIDEND BALANCES

I was told by my cashier I have a remaining balance available of my 2021 dividend. Is there anywhere to view my dividend when I'm not at the checkout stand?

PCC replies: Thank you for writing in about the 2021 dividend. You can view your awarded dividend as well as view all transactions that contained your dividend on PCC's website. After you have linked your website account to your membership, all dividend transactions can be viewed under "Membership" in the "Dividend" tab. The 2021 dividend will be available to you until December 31, 2023. If you have any questions about your dividend, you can always reach out to Membership@pccmarkets.com.

See what's new in PCC standards

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certifying bodies, like the Washington State Department of Agriculture. This requirement was established to combat a lack of regulation on those products that means consumers might otherwise use products on their home food gardens that contain heavy metals, sewage sludge, pesticide residues and other contaminants without realizing it.

However, "there are other instances—cut flowers is a good example—where we encourage things more than requiring. It's hard to say, for instance, that we will only sell organic certified flowers, because that market is still relatively small and extremely expensive. We try to pace some of our standards as industries grow," Robinson said.

In its current form the standard for flowers, ornamental plants and seeds encourages merchandisers to prioritize vendors that minimize their environmental impact, and then pushes the envelope where it is feasible, such as the requirement that all roses be certified by VeriFlora, a third-party sustainability certifier, and that all edible plant seeds sold at PCC must be certified organic.

Influencing change

With 16 stores, PCC has some influence over suppliers to encourage different growing practices or work with them on product formulations. Most often this takes the form

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of producers reformulating products so that PCC can start carrying them: Most recently, said Health and Body Care Merchandiser Steven Jamieson, Island Thyme body lotion was reformulated to meet PCC ingredient standards; PCC stores began carrying the lotion in April.

In a few examples for foods, Califia, which produces nondairy milks, switched from carrageenan, which some studies link to gastrointestinal disorders, to guar gum instead. Daiya eliminated titanium dioxide in many of its dairy alternatives, while Molly Moon's Ice Cream began baking mint brownies for their Scout Mint flavor in-house because Girl Scout Cookies did not meet our standards. Wilcox Farms, which produces PCC's private label eggs, began its organic mobile pasture program for the co-op.

At other times, though, a supplier chooses not to have its products on PCC's shelves rather than stay within the standards. One brand of conditioner was eventually removed, for instance, after the manufacturer could or would not replace the quaternary ammonium compound, a class of chemicals used in cleaning products

and personal care that have been linked to a number of health concerns. Maintaining standards for such health and body care products is especially challenging because they are sometimes reformulated without notice about new ingredients.

Common questions

The new standards also provide answers to some common questions. PCC staff members are frequently asked, for instance, why PCC exempts boxed hair dye from some of its ingredient prohibitions.

Discontinuing sales of boxed hair dyes has been an internal debate at PCC for years, the new document explains, but the co-op ultimately decided that it was better to provide the safest options available on the market for customers than to eliminate them all.

"The hair dyes that PCC sells are free of many toxic chemicals used heavily in conventional boxed hair dye, such as artificial fragrances, dyes and certain petroleum-based ingredients. There are, however, certain ingredients with health concerns that are essential to the functionality of permanent hair dyes, but the brands PCC carries work hard to limit these ingredients to only the essentials and in the smallest quantities necessary," according to the document. PCC will post these FAQs online as each one is completed.

The next step in the process will be developing "a more robust and comprehensive and detailed auditing system," Robinson said, as well as developing new standards for categories such as textiles and others that have historically been overlooked by grocery stores, as they make up a small percentage of sales. Other potential plans include climate impact labels or other ways to address the carbon footprints of different products to help both PCC and shoppers find the most sustainable products.

This standards work is driven by PCC's Quality Standards Committee. For more on its work see pccmarkets.com/r/6149.

Take a look

Curious about PCC's product standards? Details are online at pccmarkets.com/r/5944. Here's a sampling of just a few excerpted requirements from various categories:

- PCC does not accept products containing synthetic ingredients that are known or probable allergen inducers and skin sensitizing agents, such as methylisothiazolinone.
- PCC will not sell any fresh and frozen raw seafood that is rated an "Avoid" by Seafood Watch.
- All whole bean and pre-ground coffee, pre-packaged and bulk, must be certified organic and fair trade or direct trade by a third-party certification.
- For fresh meats, no sub-therapeutic or non-therapeutic antibiotics, hormones or growth promoters may be used in any form to control or prevent disease, or to promote growth or feed efficiency.
- If vendors disclose produce as being hydroponically grown by labeling the shipments, PCC staff must label the items accordingly at the shelf as grown in soilless systems.



Tulalip Bay Chinook: *Fishing with resilience and hope*

By Niki Cleary, guest contributor

(Editor's note: *The Tulalip Bay Chinook fishery, located about 40 miles north of Seattle, is one of the few that meets PCC's strict standards for Chinook salmon. The tribe plays a leading role in salmon restoration work, and salmon—as explained below—are a crucial part of its culture and identity. Tulalip Chinook Salmon is not always available for retail sale because subsistence needs take priority. When supplies are sufficient to sell at PCC stores, packages are clearly labeled with the fishery's name.*)

The citizens of the Tulalip Tribes are known as the people of the salmon and the killer whale people. Since glaciers swept across the land creating the rich gravel beds that provide salmon with spawning habitat, our people have tied our lives to those of the salmon. Our people have been part of our environment as salmon evolved from one type of fish into five distinct species. We lived and grew and thrived alongside our wild brothers and sisters. When colonization took its toll on our peoples, the Tribes remembered our obligations and included the animals and plants of our lands and waters in our treaties.

Today we continue to honor and preserve that relationship. Every spring we welcome the first King Salmon (Chinook) of the season, in a ceremony. We show him respect and reaffirm our relationship, knowing that he is a messenger for his people. The Tulalip Bay King Fishery is unique. It continues our tradition of living within our ecosystem, rather than apart from it. The fishery and the hatchery that feeds it are reflections of our values as a people.

Since treaty times our people have watched as our environment was poisoned and our wild relatives began disappearing. Chinook, as well as other species, saw significant declines in the 1980s.

"I think it was '83 or '84, our fishermen decided not to fish Snohomish River wild stocks because of the decline," reminisced Tulalip's Natural and Cultural Resources Director Jason Gobin. "The thought was, if they didn't fish for a full cycle, those fish would come back. Here we are 40 years later, we're still not fishing those salmon."

The Tulalip Hatchery released an estimated 2 million Chinook in 2020. They are genetically indistinguishable from the Snohomish Basin's wild Chinook population.

When Puget Sound Chinook were listed as threatened, the tribe began transitioning to use of local natural stocks, ultimately integrating wild fish into the broodstock. This links the hatchery program with the native stock and minimizes potential for genetic harm to the population.

The fish are released from and return to Tulalip Bay, a waterway with no naturally occurring Chinook run, to ensure that Tulalip's hatchery fish don't compete with native Kings for spawning habitat. The area, nicknamed the Tulalip bubble, provides rare opportunities to catch Chinook salmon.

"We call it the bubble because it's a little bubble on the map," Gobin explained. "We haven't had a directed wild Chinook fishery outside Tulalip Bay since the 1980s. This provides the only opportunity for our people to harvest Chinook and it's one of the few opportunities for non-native sports fishermen to catch Chinook for recreation."

In addition to the benefits to people, Gobin highlighted Tulalip's history and culture as Killer Whale people, and what Tulalip's hatchery means for the Southern Resident Killer Whales.

"We have a story of why the Killer Whale is our logo. One year when the fish weren't



The tribe's Owuloolt estuary, a 400-acre marsh habitat, provides essential feeding and sheltering habitat for young king salmon before they venture out to sea. Photo Credit: F. Bauer Hillery

returning to the rivers and our people were starving the Killer Whales took pity on the people of the Snohomish village and drove seals onto the beach to feed our ancestors."

The Tulalip tribal fishery only harvests Chinook within Tulalip Bay and 2,000 feet offshore, after they've passed through the feeding grounds of the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Ensuring fish are available to save this Endangered Species Act (ESA)—listed population of Orcas has become a priority for the entire state in recent years.

"I think, in a way, they are coming to save us again by forcing us to recognize the damage from lack of habitat protection, pollution, urban growth, water quality decline and the many factors that have gone on since treaty times. They're forcing us to recognize it and fix it."

The tribes' modern era as resource stewards began with a landmark 1974 federal court ruling (the Boldt Decision) that restored the tribes' treaty rights to fish and recognized their authority to govern and protect fisheries, on equal footing with the U.S. and state governments.

Since then, Treaty Tribes of Washington have become the driving force behind countless habitat restoration, mitigation and recovery efforts. Fish are not just a resource to us, they are an integral part of our culture and identity. The Tulalip Hatchery is a stopgap to carry us through while we continue to invest in repairing the damage modern living has inflicted upon our world.

Tulalip is producing fish at the Tribe's expense for the benefit of our 5,000 citizens, the Southern Resident Orcas and all fishermen in Washington state, but the economic benefit of the fish isn't what justifies the expense, said Gobin. We're fulfilling a solemn promise that our ancestors made with our relatives to always do our part to protect them and sustain them.

The Tribe has taken on large costs to operate cutting-edge hatchery and fishery programs. The hatchery and fishery in the bay create economic opportunity for over 350 tribal fishermen—including some whose only access to the resource depends on running tiny skiffs in the bay—to make an income. Yet for tribal members, the ceremonial and subsistence value of these fish is even greater. As Gobin says, "To have fish in our diet and the cultural teachings of fishing and being on the water, that is the greatest benefit.

We are allowing our people to continue this way of life. We are doing this out of responsibility and a need to preserve our culture. Without this fishery, we would have lost our identity a long time ago."

Though the future sometimes feels grim, Gobin and many Tulalips are hopeful that returning to indigenous management practices can undo the damage. That we can still build a world where humans live within, rather than apart from their environment.

"We wouldn't spend money on a hatchery if we had a healthy fishery. But what we've seen in the last 40 years is that this is going to be a long haul. It's taken us hundreds of years to destroy these rivers and waterways. It's going to take us a long time to build them back up to function as they did in the past" said Gobin.

"Today, we have substantial monitoring, tagging and otolith marking to see how our hatchery fish are interacting with wild fish and other hatchery fish. Our biologists are working to understand the limiting factors for all Chinook in the Snohomish Basin. We continue to upgrade our hatchery itself to more efficiently raise salmon.

"There are only two small creeks feeding the Tulalip Hatchery, so we are putting in a large water reuse system with UV filtration." That system will increase (up to four times) the water supply to the hatchery so the tribe can raise more fish, and increase water volume for fish health and growth.

Tulalip is proud to partner with PCC Community Markets, an organization that shares our values. By sharing the story of Tulalip Bay Chinook, we are helping to keep this part of our culture alive for future generations.

"As a tribal member, Chinook is my favorite salmon to eat and harvest. The Tribe's hatchery, restoration and environmental advocacy is helping carry our culture forward. We are making sure that our future includes Chinook for people and orcas."

We are fulfilling our responsibility as stewards of the environment, as we always have, since time immemorial.

Niki Cleary is director of communications for the Tulalip Tribes.

Want to hear more of Tulalip's ancestral language? Visit tulaliplushootseed.com.

Tulalip Bay Chinook fishery

The Tulalip Tribes' comprehensive sustainability efforts underpin this fishery, which earned top marks under PCC's Chinook Sourcing Standard. PCC commissioned the National Fisheries Conservation Center to develop this standard as a tool to protect the diminishing prey supply of the Salish Sea's endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales, which feed primarily on Chinook salmon.

The tiny tribal fishery is an "island" of sustainable Chinook salmon fishing at a time when devastating environmental pressures—e.g. climate change, habitat degradation and harmful urban runoff—have precluded directed Chinook fishing in Puget Sound, limiting harvest to hatchery fish. Among the Tulalip fishery's key features:

- "Post-prey" catch. Chinook salmon have already escaped from the feeding grounds of Southern Residents when they are caught in Tulalip Bay and the shallow waters along its outer shore. The endangered, fish-eating orcas hunt further offshore, while seal-eating "transient" whales (from separate orca populations) do occasionally visit these waters, a fact celebrated in Tulalip tradition.
- Effective harvest controls. Precautionary catch limits and the Tulalip Tribes' narrowly conscribed inshore fishing area (in the bay and along its shallow outer shore) protect the endangered wild Chinook swimming home to spawning grounds in the Snohomish Basin and other nearby rivers.
- Careful hatchery support. A tribal hatchery built inside Tulalip Bay in the 1980s sustains the tribal Chinook fishery. The hatchery uses Chinook salmon broodstock derived from the Skykomish River (a major tributary of the Snohomish). This helps ensure that any returning fish that "stray" to spawn upriver bring genetics originating in the native population.
- Comprehensive salmon stewardship. For decades Tulalip has led habitat restoration efforts in the Snohomish Basin, investing millions of dollars and rallying multiple partners (agencies, NGOs, local landowners, towns, ports) to reopen blocked spawning habitat, nursery grounds and marine "pastures" so that salmon and all the species that depend on them can endure. The persistence of the tribal fishery—and the Snohomish Basin's Chinook population itself—reflects a determined tribal commitment to restore and protect the salmon.
- Strong research. Knowing that uncertainty and blind spots can undermine fisheries, Tulalip's fishery scientists run an extensive program of monitoring and research: marking and carefully tracking hatchery fish, monitoring the spawning grounds, documenting the catch, and now driving studies of marine plankton and juvenile salmon in offshore waters of Puget Sound to inform the tribes' evolving efforts in a new frontier of habitat conservation: learning how to protect the healthy marine ecosystems where salmon feed and fatten up before returning home to spawn.

Partnership shines with “prep cooks” from 20 countries

By Tara Austen Weaver, guest contributor

In restaurant kitchens, there is a position called a prep cook that is responsible for washing greens, chopping vegetables and precooking certain meal components. It's the prep cook's responsibility to set up the chef and the kitchen for success, to give them the tools they need to excel. It is an unheralded but essential job that does much of the heavy lifting.

If the food industry in Seattle has a prep cook, it might just be Dreamland Foods.

Located in an unassuming commercial building in North Seattle, Dreamland is the creation of the Joudi family, now run by the second generation. Walid Joudi's Palestinian parents, Akram and Lamis, immigrated in 1985, eventually settling in Washington state. Though his father had been a general manager of a medical supply company, now, as an immigrant, he hoped to start his own business and provide a better life for his children. Dreamland Foods began as a way to share the food of their culture—tabbouleh, hummus, baba ganoush and more. Their products are based on family recipes and are now carried in stores throughout the Northwest.

But prepared foods are only part of Dreamland's business model, which has evolved over the past 36 years. Since 2018 they have also served as prep cooks—the kitchen elves, as it were—for a variety of other food businesses: restaurants, hotels, school and hospital cafeterias, grocery stores and more. The salad bar lettuce you might have piled on your plate, the pasta salad you picked up from the deli, the store-branded snack-pack you bought to eat at the beach, these all may have originated in Dreamland's commissary kitchen.

PCC is one of the many food businesses that benefits from a partnership with Dreamland—outsourcing some of the components for deli items, like the steamed beets that go into PCC's Walnut Beet Salad. Dreamland uses the same produce that is sold in PCC stores but has a dedicated person whose job it is just to process beets.

"The challenge of bringing in 50 pounds of beets, steaming them, taking them out while they're still hot, peeling the skin off them and then cutting them up—it's hard," says Tracy Marik, PCC's fresh director. Dreamland is able to operate at scale and with extreme consistency. Dreamland also cooks the pasta and grains for some of PCC's deli salads, a process they are able to perfect and execute to within five seconds for each batch.

"There's no inconsistency with the product," Marik explains—"that all goes away when Dreamland takes over."

Much of this has to do with choices Dreamland has made. Within their 15,000-square foot warehouse is a specially constructed cold prep kitchen that is kept at 39 degrees F. Workers slicing cucumbers and carrots and assembling falafel wraps and salads are masked and gloved, but also wearing insulated jackets that Dreamland provides. "It's not an easy ask" to have employees work under such conditions, Walid admits, "but it's the right thing to do." Working in a chilled kitchen keeps the produce far fresher. (In other prep kitchens, produce may be processed at room temperature but, due to regulations, can only be unrefrigerated for a limited time and is more likely to be sliced by machine.)

"We're trying to stay away from that," Walid explains. "This is a way to control our quality. If you get stuff precut, that's the first day of shelf life right there."



Photo courtesy of Dreamland Foods.

This dedication to product means that retaining employees is a huge priority for the Joudi family. Dreamland currently has 45 employees, all specially trained to their methods and equipment. In the warehouse a series of flags hang high overhead, each one representing the birthplace of one of the employees (current flag count is 20). "We have a diverse company," Walid explains—something he has been intentional about promoting. "This is a way to say 'I appreciate you, I see you.'"

What happens to a well-tuned food company when a pandemic hits and—nearly overnight—cafeterias close, salad bars and hot buffets shut down due to potential virus spread, and restaurants shutter?

"We were scared," Walid remembers. "Seventy percent of our business was gone in a day. What were we going to do? It's a scary time, especially for a business owner."

Here, too, Dreamland's dedication to product and staff guided their decisions. "We shut for one day," Walid explains. Then, he and General Manager Turgay Aldemir pivoted



Photo courtesy of Dreamland Foods.

This is a way to say “I appreciate you, I see you.”

the company toward prepacked foods—salads, wraps and more, for people now working at home but still needing to be fed.

"We couldn't just shut down," said Walid. "All our team members have families, they pay rent. Our employees are our most important thing—if we lose them, we can't do this work. It's always about the team."

Walid took a pay cut but retained all employees—and, within a month, managed to catch up to prior year's production volume. The company eventually received a government-offered loan through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to help with pandemic support.

Over the past two years, pandemic-related supply chain issues have challenged both PCC and Dreamland, but it has also allowed the partnership to shine. Last summer's 4th of July showed off this synergy.

With the holiday approaching, and supply chain shortages becoming more common, Marik and the PCC team grew worried about their supply of Vegenaïse—the egg-free mayonnaise product used in the deli-made potato salad so popular at summer cookouts. With the holiday falling on a weekend, the number of revelers was expected to be high. Concerned about not being able to meet customer demand, Marik reached out to Aldemir and Walid at Dreamland.

"We had never made mayonnaise in our life," explains Aldemir. "There were ingredients we had never heard of before—pea protein and brown rice syrup—and we had no idea of ratios, but we started testing." They had to source large amounts of pea protein and fly it in from California to be able to produce the 700 gallons of Vegenaïse needed for the deli sections in all 15 PCC stores, and they had three days to do it in.

"Dreamland stepped up and literally worked 24 hours a day and through a weekend to come up with hundreds of gallons of Vegenaïse for us," says Marik.

Dreamland's Vegenaïse saved the potato salad, and they have since gone on to reformulate the recipe to remove the brown rice syrup. "It's the only Vegenaïse that I know of with no added sweeteners," says Marik. "It's great to get that high quality we want and to also take out the sweeteners."

PCC and Dreamland are refining their partnership and finding better ways to work together. They've started experimenting with a closed loop system of reusable containers for items like roasted garlic that Dreamland prepares in bulk. It is now being transported in a covered tray that can be washed and reused to cut down on packaging waste. Expanding that program is a goal for 2022.

And Dreamland, which currently supplies stores, restaurants and cafeterias across Washington and into Oregon, Idaho and Montana, is expanding as well. There is a new facility in the works for Eugene, Oregon, which will allow them to cover more territory without sacrificing quality. But it remains very much a family company—Walid's wife Nevin and daughter Gabrielle also work in the office (parents Akram and Lamis have since retired).

How does it feel to have grown a company devoted to feeding people well? "Happy and proud," Walid says—"and really careful about how we run the business. You're feeding pregnant women, and old people and kids; you have to stand behind everything you make." But there are payoffs. "It's all about the food and the joy we see in people's faces when they taste it," he says.

Seattle writer Tara Austen Weaver is author of several books, including "Orchard House: How a Neglected Garden Taught One Family to Grow," "Growing Berries and Fruit Trees in the Pacific Northwest," and "A Little Book of Flowers, Peonies and Dahlias."

45 YEARS AGO IN SOUND CONSUMER

"PCC acts on redlining"

May 1977: Recently the PCC Board of Trustees was asked to approve the opening of several new savings accounts for the co-op, and the issue arose as to which banks these accounts should be in. The Board decided that the banks' policies and performances in not redlining should be considered in this decision as well as the financial criteria such as interest rates. Redlining has come to the attention of many people in Seattle during the past few years, and the lending policies that funnel money out to the suburbs in the form of home mortgage loans and home improvement loans and deny the same loans to people within the city have become an important issue in Seattle and other parts of the country.

PCC grants help organic farms reach new heights

On a small family farm in Royal City, Wash., population 2,293, Santos and Zanaida Guadarrama start off the spring growing season with organic asparagus.

The crop is a Washington symbol and loved by Royal Produce regulars—but organic asparagus is challenging to grow and labor-intensive to harvest, requiring daily attention. Last year, even working nonstop, the couple had to till some of the crop back in the soil.

This year, there's new help: a solar-powered, foot-operated "picking assistant" that can be operated by a single worker. The Guadarramas hope the machine, purchased with the aid of a PCC Organic Producers grant, will help the farm transition to a new era. It's more efficient, ergonomic, quiet and environmentally sound than the two-person diesel tractor team it replaces.

Royal Produce is located halfway between Seattle and Spokane, selling a variety of vegetable crops at farmers markets in Wenatchee and Moses Lake. It's not a PCC supplier. But the 3-year-old grants are meant to support organic farming regardless of whether the businesses have any other connection to the co-op.

This year, six grants totaling \$25,000 represented small as well as large businesses in all corners of the state. In most cases, even a small dollar amount makes a difference that brings farms to another level and supports long-term preservation of organic products, said Aimee Simpson, PCC's director of advocacy and product sustainability. While PCC has separate "Diverse Entrepreneurs" grants, the grants committee also considered whether applications would benefit historically marginalized or underserved communities and people, another co-op goal.

"We put our money where our mouth is and we walk our talk, we're not just supporting farms that help us," said Kevin Byers, PCC's produce manager and a grant committee member. "I don't know anyone else who does this."

The recipients are:

Rent's Due Ranch, Stanwood

One of the region's first organic farms and a PCC supplier since 1982, Rent's Due Ranch provides an "astounding" quantity and variety of vegetables for a family farm, said Byers. It was founded on just a single acre of produce—by a couple growing food for their family—then began selling just lettuce to the co-op. Now, though, the 60 to 70 different organic crops grown for PCC on its 60 acres ranges from kale to corn, spring peas to winter squash. Founder Michael Shriver and his crew spend the winter propagating organic plant starts in greenhouses—their vegetable starts are also sold at PCC for the region's gardens—then they tend crops in the fields.

Since the early 1990s, the vast majority of Rent's Due deliveries have used reusable plastic crates rather than single-use or disposable containers. It's an expensive investment that pays off in environmental benefits.

The totes are unloaded at PCC, stored, and sent back with drivers on the next



Photo courtesy of Clover Mountain Dairy

delivery to refill again—the sort of "closed loop" system that PCC is encouraging for packaging. The Organic Producers Grant will help the farm replace its aging and cracked totes.

The replacements will prevent more than 27,000 disposable packages from going to landfills, by farm estimates.

Silva Family Farms, Oak Harbor

Just about anyone who has tasted the sweet Albion strawberries grown at this 7-acre berry farm makes a mental note to look for crops from Pablo Silva and Maura Vasquez. Both were raised in agricultural families, immigrating to the United States from Mexico. Frustrated with the "toxic spraying practices" of the strawberry farms where he first worked here, Silva wrote on the farm's web page, the husband-wife team committed to organic farming.

"We know how many chemicals are used in conventional farming. We know how much harm is done to us, the family, and the environment," they wrote in the grant application.

After working as key managers at Bow Hill Blueberries for many years, they began

growing their own organic strawberries, raspberries and blueberries in 2016, selling them through farmers markets and the Puget Sound Food Hub. In 2019 they bought their own land.

The farmers planned to add another 3 acres of organic strawberries to the farm this year, using the grant funds toward a cultivator. That would control weeds without the need for plastic mulch, as well as improve yields by cutting the plant "runners" and reducing the time needed for expensive and laborious hand-weeding. It's more environmentally sound, they said—plus more efficient, a crucial improvement for a small organic farm.

They wrote that the cultivator "is a perfect example of how investing in the right equipment can lead to significant savings over the long run."

Long Hearing Farm, Rockport

Long Hearing Farm is small and relatively new, but it's already made an outsized impact. The rural workers co-op and farm has made organic, culturally appropriate food more available to the people it serves,

from schools to food banks to tribal food programs. With the PCC grant, Long Hearing will purchase an electric harvester for salad greens, expanding production and picking greens more quickly and safely.

In 2021 the farm harvested 150 to 200 pounds of salad greens per week; the new machine can pick 300 pounds per hour with less risk of worker injury. There's a cascading effect to that work: helping the farm become more profitable and efficient will help it increase its already considerable donations. Founding member Elizabeth Bragg, who has Blackfeet, Cherokee, Gros Ventre and European-American ancestry, wrote in the application that the farm integrates indigenous food practices and years of market gardening experience. (The farm name honors Bragg's great-great-grandmother, Long Hearing Woman; Bragg oversees it with fellow founding member Kelly Skillingstead.)

We feed as many families as the soil and our abilities allow

Long Hearing's contributions last year included distributing produce to its local food bank through the farm's Community Food Fund, working with the Darrington School District on its first fresh foods purchasing grant, working with Skagit Indian Nation to distribute weekly bags of produce to their Elders program, supplying more than 1,000 pounds of produce to two indigenous farmers markets in a partnership with Seattle Indian Health Board (through Groundwork, a food and political education hub building community food systems for all), and hosting a nettle gathering event and harvest party for Western Washington University's Native American Student Union on its Otaopohkat Plot, an area of the farm dedicated to traditional and ancestral foods. Their local and national service includes



Mike Shriver of Rent's Due Ranch, photo by Meryl Schenker

the National Young Farmers Coalition, Groundwork, and the Pacific Northwest BIPOC Food Systems Network.

As Bragg put it, "We grow food as if the lives of the children in our communities matter. We feed as many families as the soil and our abilities allow."

Clover Mountain Dairy, Chewelah

Clover Mountain's owners made two big changes last year—at least big from their perspective. The number of grass-fed cows milked at the small organic dairy increased from three to four, and cheese joined its production schedule along with vat-pasteurized milk and yogurt. Now, Stacy and Virginia Thomas, the Coast Guard veterans who own the 40-acre farm, have expanded to eight cows: Buttercup, Rose, Carnation, Daisy, Dodie, Arrowleaf, Dandelion and Sunflower.

Starting out their cheesemaking project, the couple made a temporary cheese cave from an upright freezer and thermostat controller. It holds less than a week's worth of cheese. Customers loved the results, they wrote in their grant application, but to make more they'll need a larger, permanent cave for aging and storing. Experienced construction workers who also built their farmhouse and barn, they plan to do the work themselves, converting a room in the current dairy to the climate-controlled cave.

Entering that marketplace will fill a gap that currently exists for organic cheeses, they said, and provide high-quality foods to their rural community and throughout Eastern Washington. Hopefully, they wrote, the project will both encourage other organic cheesemakers to set up shop in the area and highlight cheeses showcasing the distinct regional identity of their more arid environment. They also hope to expand production enough to distribute cheese to a retail store in Spokane.

"We have witnessed that when a community has access to premium quality products at a fair price they relish them and will support their local farmers."

Alluvial Farms

Matthew McDermott and Katie Pencke met through Seattle Tilth, where they managed community-based food equity agriculture programs. Their community work includes the Puget Sound Food Hub Co-operative board of directors and the Whatcom County Agricultural Advisory Committee.

A combined three decades of experience helped them establish a robust 45-acre farm in Whatcom County with a vision of "ecological stewardship and resilient local foodsheds." A PCC grant will go toward a larger vineyard trellis project at the farm.

Alluvial produces organic pork, raising pastured pigs and growing grains and legumes for part of their feed on the land. They've also launched an organic hemp business and are starting to produce grapes, selling initial harvests to a winery. Their goal is to layer different lines of business for better long-term stability. Alluvial Farms planted an acre of Jupiter grapes last year and plans to eventually plant 5 acres yielding 25 tons of grapes annually for wine, raisins and grape juice.

Every seven years, the applicants wrote, "resting" the farm from pastured pigs will help break parasite cycles, and having other lines of income would help fill those gaps. Adding grapes to the farm should both improve the farm's profitability while helping properly steward the land.

Royal Produce, Royal City

Santos and Zanaida Guadarrama worked as farmhands for years at P&P Farms in Royal City after emigrating from Mexico



Photo courtesy of Royal Produce

as newlywed teens "with big dreams and a few dollars." They became friends with P&P owners Ike and Alice Parker, leasing land from the couple after the Parkers retired and eventually buying their own 3.5-acre farm.

Over the years, it's become harder for such small independent farms to survive. The labor market has tightened and the children who once ran the farm with them have largely moved on to other careers, just as they're getting older and the difficult physical labor becomes even more challenging.

Over the years, Santos wrote in the application, he has seen other small Hispanic-run farms emulate Royal Produce. It's a

compliment and a motivator. They'd like to show how new technologies can keep a small independent farm alive, both for their own children and grandchildren and for others in the community.

"There are people like me who have dirt in their blood. We were born to be farmers against all odds. It takes resilience to maintain small family farms. There is something special about fruits and vegetables from a small farm versus a big-box store. If we can keep alive the traditions that we have held for many generations of learning and teaching others how to grow your own food, then that is a success."

A conversation with Byrd Barr Place Food Bank

PCC's mission is to ensure that good food nourishes the communities it serves, while cultivating vibrant, local, organic food systems. We're proud to partner with organizations throughout the region and share their stories. Meredith Sibley and Brian Yeager of Byrd Barr Place (BBP) recently spoke with *Sound Consumer* contributor Tara Austen Weaver about their food bank program and the role it has played in the Central District community since its founding in 1964.

Q: Tell us a little about the program's history.

A: We're a community action agency—that means we're part of a larger network of community action agencies across Washington state (and) the country. We have a shared common mission of alleviating poverty. Part of our technique is finding out from the community what the needs are and how they would be most helped. So, we design our services based on community feedback.

The food bank has been around for more than 30 years. Until very recently it was operated out of the fire station on 18th Avenue. Right now we're operating out of a church community center in Capitol Hill while our building is being renovated.

Q: What makes your program unique?

A: The food bank is considered a point of entry for social services. People who are food insecure may have other needs as well—so when they come to the food bank, there's a community connector they can meet with and we can find out: Yes, you need food, but do you also need coats? Do you need hygiene supplies? Do you have a high energy bill you need assistance with? Are you behind on rent and have an eviction notice?

The food bank is open three days a week and that's when people can come by and shop the grocery model...we set up stalls and folks can pick the protein they want and how many vegetables they want and shop according to their dietary restrictions or what culturally appropriate food they desire.

We also have a home grocery delivery program and have an incredible cohort of volunteers—some are on bikes and some are in cars—they drive food out to seniors and other homebound people who can't make it to the food bank. For some folks that's the only food they are getting all week, so [we] make sure they're getting balanced meals with fresh vegetables and quality proteins and other things they need like cooking oil. There are a lot of smaller partnerships the food bank facilitates: they reach out to schools and if there are food-insecure students [we] will pack specific bags of food for those students. They drop off food at the Central District tiny house village. Right now we have a partnership with an organization called Planet Worth: we donate some of our fresh food and they prepare it in their kitchen and deliver hot meals to homeless encampments around Seattle. We also do all the Little Free Pantries around the Central District.

Q: What services does the program need, and what challenges do you face?

A: Running a food bank during a pandemic has been a real challenge. The [client] numbers go up, obviously, but there are safety issues and not knowing how to navigate that and learning as we go.



Photos by Meryl Schenker. (Top) Byrd Barr Receptionist Karina Kaiwi loads bags for clients with fresh fruits and vegetables. (Bottom l) Jasmine Rose unloads food from PCC's food bank program for clients. (Bottom r) Byrd Barr Food Bank Coordinator Brian Yeager.

Another ongoing challenge is reducing shame for accessing food through the food bank. We are here and there are no barriers to accessing food—please come and get food if you need it.

Q: Is there a favorite aspect of the program you could share?

A: In recent years, we've started fundraising and requesting private donations and now we purchase a lot of food from local farms in the area. That has really improved the quality of the food and the general satisfaction of people who come through the food bank. We're able to not only to get local, organic produce to our clients who love it, but we're also supporting small, family farms.

Also, we have a receptionist at Byrd Barr Place—when you call us, someone answers the phone. So many times our receptionist hears: Thank you for answering, nobody ever picks up when I'm trying to find help. We are always connecting people with other resources or making sure our community

connector can find an actual person they can talk with if they're having trouble applying for food stamps or getting a new social security card so they can apply to a program. We're making sure when people come to Byrd Barr Place they are greeted with a smile and they feel respected.

Q: What's next for the food bank program?

A: We're moving back into our building in August—it's been a massive, \$12 million renovation, and most of that has been seismic retrofitting the building, so that it lasts for the next 50 years.

We're also exploring a further client choice model for when we move back—the idea of doing appointments in the evenings, after work hours, which we haven't done before. So that people who don't have time to wait in line—or have shame waiting in line—can still come and get food.

Q: Is there anything else you would like people to know?

A: Come volunteer—come see who is in the food bank line. It will change you. Whatever you think about how people end up in a food bank line you will realize it's everybody—normal people.

Also, we study qualitative and quantitative data specifically on Black Washingtonians. We have reports on health, civic engagement, education, the criminal justice system. You can support us by reading our reports—they're on our website—knowing what the social issues are and educating yourself, seeing how your vote matters, and leaning into what is inequitable now in Washington state.

Learn more

For more information about Byrd Barr Place see byrdbarrplace.org.

Kirkland PCC expands in new location

By Rebekah Denn

"We are so glad you are here!" shoppers told staff at PCC's Kirkland store when it first opened on March 16, 1978. "We've just been waiting for the store to open...it's beautiful!"

The original store was PCC's second location when it opened 44 years ago—with-out working refrigeration or a lot of other amenities in its first days.

"For many of our customers, members and staff, their first memories of PCC are behind these old walls," Assistant Store Director Eli Dorr-Fay said in a staff letter as the final day in that building approached.

Earlier this year, the store relocated to a brighter, bigger and significantly updated location less than a mile from its old home. Members and shoppers lined up for opening day March 2 with similarly kind words as CEO Krish Srinivasan and Store Director Mike Stampalia sliced open a ceremonial cabbage instead of a ribbon.

The storefront at 430 Kirkland Way is about 19,000 square feet, 30% larger than the original. All staff members from the old store were offered jobs at the new location.

Features of the new store include a pizzeria with hot slices and made-to-order whole pies, a hot food bar with more offerings and a salad bar featuring organic produce, an expanded bulk department with closed-loop bulk body care items (where companies can reuse packaging), and a full-service meat and seafood counter.

Store staff will continue to work with Kirkland Hopelink and Community Resource Network (CRN), its partners for more than 15 years through PCC's Food Bank Program—a program originally founded at the Kirkland store.

It will be the fifth co-op location to pursue the Living Building Challenge (LBC) Petal Certification by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI), the world's most rigorous green building standard. To meet these standards and in alignment with the co-op's vision to inspire and advance the health and well-being of people, their communities and our planet, steps included:

- **RECYCLED & REPURPOSED:** Many of the store fixtures that hold the co-op's high-standard products were built with recycled materials and repurposed equipment from other PCC stores when possible, including shelving, racks, tables and even an ice machine.

- **REDUCED ENERGY:** The new store was designed to have more than three times the amount of windows—from just over 400 square feet to now more than 1,400 square feet—which brings in more natural daylight and significantly reduces indoor lighting energy use.

- **LOW-IMPACT REFRIGERATION:** The new Kirkland store joins the co-op's Ballard, West Seattle and Bellevue locations in using a carbon dioxide refrigeration system, which boasts 3,000 times less of a global warming potential than the synthetic refrigerants used in most grocery stores. PCC continually works to reduce refrigerant leaks across its stores and will begin to phase out high-impact refrigerants at older stores with lower impact and climate-friendly alternatives. Of the approximately 38,000 supermarket locations in the U.S., less than 2% of existing stores use natural refrigerants (like a carbon dioxide system) exclusively.

- **PUBLIC ART:** The store features five columns with hand-glazed ceramic tiles in the store's seating area by artist Mary Iverson representing "World Tablecloths." Each column features a tablecloth



design inspired by the textile patterns of a unique culture that is part of the community makeup of Kirkland: Coast Salish, Nordic, India, Japan and England.

"A tablecloth is the underlying fabric that makes a meal special, weaving colors and symbols with family traditions," Iverson said. "PCC is such a special part of the community: as a space for neighbors to gather in or the source of the food they bring home to their tables to serve friends and family. I appreciate the opportunity to bring this work to the Kirkland community and hope to inspire their table conversations."

Sunflower Center

The Kirkland co-op actually wasn't planned as a PCC. Organizers envisioned it as "Co-op East," part of a nonprofit created through the Bellevue Environmental Group. Half of the "Sunflower Center" in a former grocery store would be taken up by that co-op, according to newspaper accounts at the time. Half would be a natural-foods restaurant, with eventual plans to add a community center, farmers market, consignment shop and classes.

"People who would use an Eastside co-op more than PCC are encouraged to transfer their memberships to the new store," directed a 1977 article in PCC's newsletter, the predecessor to the *Sound Consumer*.

Mimi Simmons, one of the original planners, remembers making weekly trips across Lake Washington to PCC's then-single store in the Ravenna neighborhood. Foods that are easily accessible now "simply weren't available elsewhere" back then, she recalled in a written remembrance. Eastsiders dearly wanted a food co-op in their own community.

"As a volunteer, my job was to call PCC members who also lived on the Eastside, and potentially interested others, soliciting \$60 memberships in Co-op East. Despite our campaign, including many hours of calls

from a lonely desk in the empty store, we were not able to find enough members," she wrote.

That contributed to another roadblock: Establishing the store would have depended on a significant loan from PCC. In a long debate that stretched past midnight, board members decided against providing the money, according to the *Sound Consumer's* account. While it was "hard to convey in a little article the complexities of all the issues before the Board," concerns included Co-op East's planned budget, skepticism about "a practical commitment to worker self-management and the politics of co-operatives," and "an unacceptable risk of store failure."

The board voted instead to survey PCC members about purchasing all the assets and liabilities of the company. In an in-store questionnaire, 73% of 782 members said yes. The purchase went through, boards of both organizations approved the sale—"followed by a sparkling cider toast"—and Co-op East was reimagined as PCC Kirkland.

"COME SEE PCC'S NEW STORE!" read the 1978 headline.

Simmons became one of the first staff members—her 39-year PCC career included serving as the co-op's longtime customer service manager—and remembered the community's commitment to that location.

For packaging parties, "Recipes were included in the family-sized bags of beans and rice. Teams of volunteers prepared these donations for our local food bank. These work parties were the first versions of PCC's decades-long, ongoing donations to those in need of food."

A different world

It looked a lot different in the early days, recalled Roxanne Green, who joined the staff in 1983 and retired 36 years later.

"Our bulk system was the big green garbage cans with black liners. We had beautiful merchandise shelves made out of

two-by-fours that Read Handyside (one of the first Kirkland employees, now working at the Fremont PCC) actually built." It was a small staff, and "we all did whatever had to be done."

Meat was sold through "The Meat Shop," a separate cooperative, at a time when members hotly debated whether PCC should even sell meat. "Even sugar was a big deal."

Stores had councils with member as well as staff representatives at the time. John Affolter, who had founded PCC as a food-buying club more than 30 years earlier, was a member of Kirkland's council.

"He was an older gentleman then and was really nice—he always brought a tofu casserole and always gave his input," Green recalled.

Some members, for instance, had wanted to expand into outside product lines like tires. "He said no, we always had those ideas, but we realized you stick with what you do best," Green said. Simmons recalled how Affolter always arrived "with ideas and lists of suggestions typed on his signature crinkly thin paper."

A remodel added the deli and some extra space in 1985, and the old store had looked about the same since then, Green said. Her work included everything from cashiering to serving as assistant store director, but overseeing health and body care products was her real love. She helped screen products and set guidelines for which products PCC should carry. For many years she served on the board of the Natural Products Association, which puts on trade shows locally and works nationally to support legislation and industry regulations. She was president of first the local and then the national board. That's the sort of work that kept her there for so many years.

"PCC really makes a difference in a lot of people's lives, and for a lot of us long-timers that was our mission, that's what we did, what we do," she said.

PCC CUSTOMER SERVICE STARS



COLTON VAN BRENK Grocery Lead, Bothell PCC

Over the last six years, Colton's willingness to help has landed him in seven positions across five different stores. In each position, he's enjoyed his coworkers the most. His current role as Grocery Lead at Bothell PCC allows him to demonstrate his empathetic style of service to staff and shoppers. He believes that service begins with kindness, knowledge of resources, and taking the time to find a solution. Colton likes to experience new foods and restaurants, from the pumpkin ravioli in the PCC Deli to global dishes while traveling with his wife, Alison. In his free time, you might find him savoring a whiskey tasting with friends or eating Mexican fare with family. When you meet Colton, it's clear that he leads with compassion every day. Thanks for all your hard work over the years!



HAYDEN CALDWELL Courtesy Clerk, Ballard PCC

Hayden joined the team at Ballard PCC in early 2021 after his friend Delilah recommended he apply. As Courtesy Clerk, he loves the independence the role offers, providing him the opportunity to connect with staff and customers across the entire store. Hayden recommends our seasonal Cranberry Orange Oatmeal Cookie, saying, "You don't want to miss it!" What stands out most about Hayden is their ability to give their whole self every day and it shows as they interact with customers, treating each person respectfully and equally. Outside of work, Hayden enjoys many hobbies, including photography, developing film, playing card and video games and watching movies. Thank you, Hayden—we so appreciate the hard work and positive energy you bring to our co-op community!

[SUSTAINABILITY REPORT]

Can you recycle plastic film?

Thin, stretchy plastic film seems like it's everywhere these days, from food packaging to dry cleaning bags. While most municipal recycling programs don't accept plastic film in curbside pickups (it's difficult to sort and process), there are other recycling options. If collected separately, it can be fully recycled at specialized facilities. PCC is collaborating with local consultants and zero waste partners, including launching a pilot program in some stores, to keep this voluminous material out of the landfill and in our recycling system.

Plastic film's recent dominance comes in part because some consumer product manufacturers are replacing rigid packaging with lighter materials, such as film. That move reduces resource consumption and transportation emissions, two major factors that contribute to a product's carbon footprint. However, the flipside is that most municipal recycling programs—the easiest way for many people to access these services—don't accept plastic film in curbside pickups because it gets tangled in sorting equipment and must be removed by hand. Those obstructions cause the whole processing facility to shut down, which drives up recycling costs and poses a potential safety risk for workers.

A growing number of retail locations across the U.S. are providing plastic film drop-off recycling bins for customers.



(Check out bagandfilmrecycling.org for the location nearest you.) Retailers bale and ship collected film to recycling facilities that are designed to handle this material. It's melted down and reformed into new plastic products, such as composite lumber, park benches and playground sets.

Be aware, though, that not all plastic film is recyclable. The easiest way to tell that it's recyclable is if the widely used How2Recycle label specifies "Plastic Film" and "Store Drop-off." It's also generally recyclable if it's stretchy (e.g., if you poke a finger in the film it doesn't rip like paper) or carries either a #2 HDPE or #4 LDPE recycling symbol. A few examples of recyclable film include produce bags, bubble wrap, zipper bags, shipping envelopes and case overwrap.

For the past couple of years, PCC stores have been collecting the plastic film that we accumulate through our daily store operations, such as film used to wrap pallet deliveries, and recycling it as a separate stream through one of our distributors. We're glad to say we're working to expand film recycling to our shoppers and members. In partnership with Cascadia Consulting Group, Return-It and CWRR, PCC has been hosting an in-store plastic film recycling pilot at our Bothell and Edmonds locations, where shoppers can drop off accumulated plastic film at a blue bin located in the store, even if it comes from other businesses.

We hope to use this pilot as a successful model to expand this program across more PCC stores—stay tuned. We recognize we can't recycle our way out of our plastic issues, so we're also engaging with our vendors and partners to phase out of plastic packaging and into more sustainable alternatives.

Puget Sound residents can also recycle plastic film through Ridwell, a Seattle startup that's making it easy for residents to recycle materials that aren't typically accepted in curbside recycling, such as clothing, batteries, cork, and of course, plastic film. Its mission aligns with PCC's waste-reduction goals, and PCC members get an exclusive 10% off any Ridwell membership at pccmarkets.com/r/6116.

[MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS]

PCC began as a food-buying club with 15 families. Now, it's exceeded 100,000 members. To celebrate that milestone, we're spotlighting several members this year who help make the co-op thrive. If you have a membership story to share in our letters page, let us know at editor@pccmarkets.com.



GWEN

Meet longtime co-op member, Gwen! She joined PCC in 1990 when her son started working at Ravenna PCC and began to bring home interesting foods. Their foodie family bonded by visiting the co-op, trying new items and experimenting with eating healthier. Gwen became a fan of Seward Park PCC and its delightful bakery, spending her mornings chatting with staff and friends over a mocha and scone. These days, you'll find Gwen in the produce department at her current home store, Columbia City PCC, where she enjoys the opportunity to sample fruits or veggies she's never tasted. It's these community connections that have kept her coming back to PCC for more than 30 years. Thanks for all the joy that you bring to our community, Gwen!



JENNY

In honor of the new Kirkland PCC, we're celebrating dedicated members from that neighborhood, like Jenny! Back in 2013, Jenny became a PCC member to support her growing family with organic foods, fresh-made deli items and sustainable meats. Over the years, Jenny's family has made fond memories at their neighborhood market. In addition to enjoying a free piece of fruit or vegetable with each visit, her little ones have participated in coloring contests, a National Night Out event hosted by Kirkland PCC, and even a pumpkin contest. Her 4-year-old won the prize pumpkin, which they carved and displayed—it was the largest jack-o-lantern on the block! Jenny appreciates the hardworking and accommodating staff who are always kind and generous to her children. Thank you for your continued support, Jenny!

Kid summer camps return to PCC classrooms

After two years online, kids are returning to PCC classrooms for summer camp. While online classes will still be available for all ages, in-person lessons and cooking camps are back.

Parent-child classes will also resume in May.

It's a welcome return for a camp program that began in the early 1990s. "We're probably the oldest, most established kids program in the Northwest," said Sephi Coyle, PCC's culinary school program director. Topics range from knife skills to baking to global cuisine, with a focus on teaching classic cooking techniques—the same, pretty much, as adult cooking classes. They share most of the same instructors, too.

"We really believe in empowering kids from a very early age to take control of the kitchen and have fun in the kitchen," Coyle said. "We try to keep them fun, with appealing recipes, (but) we don't dumb our recipes down."

Ideally, children's camps combat the idea that cooking is a chore or a stressful experience.

"We want to inspire a love of eating, working with food, and building skills so that they don't need recipes. We're setting them up for more intuitive cooking," Coyle said. In years past that's meant everything from handmade pasta to pizza dough to field trips to a working farm where they can harvest and cook with fresh produce.

There is a compromise or two. The very youngest students might use scissors or crinkle-cut slicers in place of knives. Coyle tries to keep in mind how her own two children might react to a proposed menu, meaning ingredients like quinoa and kale might not be headlined quite as prominently.

"We introduce global cuisines and we introduce the fundamentals of cooking—good knife skills, measuring, sautéing and roasting, tasting and adjusting seasonings."

Fresh Summer Rolls

"Kids recipes" are as fresh, colorful and fun as any "adult" dish. These rolls are a summer camp favorite. They are fresh and delicious served straight away or as lunch the next day. Most of these ingredients can be swapped out for others so experiment and enjoy.

Makes: 4 to 8 servings

8 large circular rice papers (like Bahn tran Bahn or StarAnise Foods brand GF spring roll wrappers)

½ block firm tofu, marinated, cut into ½-inch strips or optional Marinated Tofu (*recipe follows*)

4 tablespoons sesame seeds, white or black

Choose 3 Ingredients From this list (you may choose more if you like, I recommend a carrot, basil or mint, and cabbage or cucumber as a basic three ingredients to start with).

- 1 medium carrot, thinly sliced or grated
- 1 medium cucumber, sliced into thin 4-inch-long strips
- 1 cup fresh mint, basil or cilantro leaves
- 1 small jicama
- 16 large cooked shrimp
- 2 green onions

Add warm water to a large pie plate and set aside.

Prepare all the ingredients, making sure that they are in small, thin slices. Place them into separate bowls or along a plate or platter so they are easy to reach but not mixed together.

Soak 2 to 3 wrappers at a time in a bowl of warm water for 1 minute or until they are soft and pliable. Remove one wrapper and place onto a clean work surface.



Avoiding the outer 2 inches, sprinkle one half tablespoon sesame seeds onto the wrapper. Next, arrange some of each remaining ingredient onto the wrapper. You want to have the ingredients off to one side of the center and avoid the outer 1 to 2 inches. Fold one end (lengthwise to the ingredients) over the top third. Gently squeeze the wrapper over these ingredients and roll firmly about halfway. Flip the 2 sides up to close off the ends and then firmly roll the rest of the way. If you roll too tightly the wrapper will rip, this is okay, just place it on top of a new wrapper and start with an extra layer. If you roll too loosely when you bite or slice into the rolls they will fall apart. This takes some practice, you will get better every time you roll.

Set the roll aside and start on the next roll. After completing all 8 rolls, slice each one on the diagonal and serve with dipping sauce. An alternative to serving with the dipping sauce is to place a tablespoon or two of the sauce into the roll before wrapping, a great way to serve for parties.

Creamy Dipping Sauce

Delicious as a dip for any veggie, over noodles or on these rolls. Make extra to have on hand since it's so good! Just remember to add extra water as this will thicken up as it chills in the refrigerator.

Makes: about ½ cup sauce

- ½ cup peanut, almond or sunflower butter
- 1 to 2 tablespoons lime juice, from 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons tamari or soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon fresh gingerroot, finely grated
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper, ground chile flakes or ½ teaspoon chile oil
- ¼ cup water, plus more as needed

Combine all ingredients except water into a bowl or large liquid measuring cup. Stir together very well. You may use a food processor or blender, especially if you are using chunky peanut butter.

After stirring the ingredients together, drizzle in water while stirring until you reach the consistency you prefer. You may add more water if you like a thinner consistency, or less for a thicker sauce. If you plan to make the sauce ahead of time, add a little more water



Photo by Charity Burggraaf

to account for absorption. The sauce can be made ahead of time and kept in a sealed container in the refrigerator for about 1 week. Taste the sauce and adjust with a little more lime juice, pepper, water or soy sauce depending on what you enjoy. I often like more ginger! Set this aside until you're ready to use.

Marinated Tofu

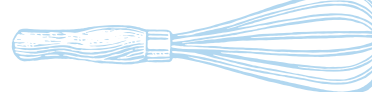
If you like, you can make your own marinated tofu, rather than purchasing baked tofu.

- 1 container (14 to 16-ounce) firm or extra firm tofu
- 3 tablespoons tamari or soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon minced gingerroot

Drain and squeeze the water from the tofu. Slice into ½-inch slabs and transfer to a baking dish or container that fits the tofu, approximately 8- by 8-inch or 9- by 9-inch in size. Add the soy sauce, oil and ginger. Let sit a minimum of 15 minutes or covered overnight in the refrigerator. Bake in a 375° F oven for 15 to 20 minutes and cool before using.

Recipes developed by Ami Karnosh

PCC COOKING CLASSES



PCC kids camps are online at pccmarkets.com/r/6117. Highlights include:

FOUNDATION OF INDIAN CUISINE (ages 10-15) with instructor Shama Joshi

GLOBAL COOKIE JAR (ages 8-12) with instructor Cam Zarcone

THE BRITISH BAKESHOP (ages 8-12) with instructor Zola Gregory

TOUR OF ITALY (ages 10-15) with instructor Paola Albanesi

A TRIP TO THAILAND (ages 8-15) with instructor Pranee Halvorson

A TOUR OF CHINA (ages 10-15) with instructor Elaine Sher

PCC BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION

Online voting for the 2022 election of trustees to the PCC Board of Trustees opened April 18 and ends at 5 p.m. May 2 (for full details see the March *Sound Consumer*, pccmarkets.com/r/6118). Once the results have been tallied, check the *Sound Consumer* website (pccmarkets.com/r/6119) for election results and an introduction to the elected trustees.

If you have questions or problems voting call 1-866-720-4357 or email pcchelp@electionservicescorp.com



A shellfish company gets into the weeds

By Sarah Sax, High Country News

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community shows how eelgrass and aquaculture can coexist in Puget Sound.

The light of the October full moon bounced across the surface of Washington's Similk Bay. Stuart Thomas stood ankle-deep in the ebbing tide, flipping black mesh bags filled with oysters.

He opened a bag and pulled out a handful of small ones, barely an inch across, shucking them quickly in the light of his headlamp. "These are Olympia oysters," said Thomas, cheerful despite the midnight hour. The only oysters native to the state, they're finally making a comeback after being driven nearly to extinction more than a century ago by overharvesting, habitat destruction, and a commercial preference for introduced species, such as the Pacific oyster.

The flesh inside the Olympia's shell is only the size of a quarter. It tastes sharp, briny and faintly of stone, more ancient, somehow, than the sweet and creamy Pacific oysters that are the mainstay of Washington's farmed shellfish industry.

A self-proclaimed genetics nerd, Thomas is charged with reviving the Olympia oyster for the Swinomish Shellfish Company. The Englishman had spent years working in Washington's commercial shellfish industry before joining the company, which is owned by the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. Now he operates under a different set of rules, with a unique prime directive: Do not mess with the eelgrass beds.

"It was made clear to me early on that everything we were to do would have to be in line with protecting the environment," said Thomas.

Less than 40 feet away from him, the eelgrass lay flat and unmoving at the water's surface. Its stillness belied the importance it holds for the marine ecosystem in this part of the world. The grasses serve as a nursery, feeding ground and resting spot for a dizzying number of species up and down the food chain, from orcas to zooplankton, including virtually all the marine foods that Indigenous communities use.

But the plant also grows in or near many of the same places that shellfish do, and conservation measures to protect it have fallen short, according to a lawsuit the Swinomish brought against the federal government in 2018. Food security, both now and in the future, shouldn't be sacrificed for economic gain, the tribe argues; the two can coexist. The Swinomish Shellfish Company is determined to prove that other vital species can thrive alongside an industry that brings in \$150 million a year to the state.

Padilla Bay, which borders the northern edge of the Swinomish Nation, holds the largest contiguous eelgrass bed in the Lower 48. At very low tide, eelgrass clumps lie fanned out and glistening in the mud. Part of the only plant family to flower completely underwater, eelgrass is essential to Puget Sound's ecological functioning; its abundance is considered a key indicator of the estuary's health.



Photos courtesy of High Country News

At high tide, if you thrust your head into an eelgrass bed, you'd see tiny bubbles of gas clinging to the thin, almost translucent green strands. These bubbles are formed by the plant as it breathes in CO₂ from the water column and breathes out oxygen. Studies have shown that eelgrass beds can help mitigate ocean acidification as the water warms — a growing problem for marine animals and the industries that rely on them, especially the shellfish industry.

The plant's importance goes beyond climate change, though.

"Native eelgrass is a foundational element of the marine ecosystem. It provides important cover and feeding areas for juvenile salmon, as well as other marine species, like Dungeness crab," Tino Villaluz, wildlife program manager for the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and an enrolled member, wrote to High Country News in an email. "Aquaculture activities that diminish or destroy native eelgrass also eliminate crucial habitat for salmon."

The fight to protect eelgrass is just part of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's larger struggle to protect the habitat that supports many of the foods they rely on for physical and cultural sustenance. For the last few decades, the Swinomish have led the charge to protect habitat for salmon and other species, developing science-based plans to manage populations, restoring tidelands and channels and reforesting streams to keep waters cool.

The tribe, like many coastal Salish tribal nations, identifies as salmon people. But overfishing, habitat loss, dams and climate change have decimated salmon stocks in the sound, straining the tribe's economic and cultural lifeline and diminishing tribal members' well-being, said Villaluz. In 2016 the tribe developed its own set of Indigenous health indicators to better understand non-physiological components of community health. Access to "first foods," such as salmon and shellfish, was identified as being central to tribal members' health and welfare, especially in a rapidly changing world.

Then in 2017 a shift in federal policy opened up much of Washington's coast to

commercial shellfish farming. Fearing that thousands of hectares of mature eelgrass beds — and the species that depend on those beds — could be lost, the tribe went to court.

Since 2007 shellfish farming has operated under a sweeping national permitting system overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In 2017, over the objections of the Swinomish and environmental groups, the Corps adjusted its rules: Now, it said, any place where any shellfish farming had occurred in the past 100 years could be considered a continuous operation and thus exempt from stricter eelgrass protection measures. In North Puget Sound alone, this would have included over 2,000 acres with mature eelgrass beds.

The Swinomish sued both the Army Corps and the National Marine Fisheries Service, arguing that their ability to fish for salmon and harvest shellfish in traditional waters required a healthy ecosystem rooted in eelgrass, and that creating such widespread exemptions would imperil eelgrass. They won against the Army Corps, forcing it to switch from sweeping national permits for shellfish farms to individual permits.

But despite that victory, the Army Corps' permitting system may still do far too much damage to eelgrass beds, said Amy van Saun, an attorney at the Center for Food Safety, which also went to court over the permitting changes and is suing the Army Corps again over industrial shellfish operation permits. The Swinomish are still challenging the federal government over how much of North Puget Sound's eelgrass can be harmed by shellfish aquaculture.

Meanwhile, they're trying to get better eelgrass protection into Skagit County's shoreline management plan.

The goal has never been to stop shellfish farming; simply to ensure that it doesn't happen at the ecosystem's expense. The same year that the tribe sued the Army Corps, it also opened its own shellfish operation, determined to prove that coexistence is possible. The Swinomish Shellfish Company's 55-acre farm was a private oyster farm back in the 1930s, but the tribe permitted the farm as a new operation,

with the much stricter protections that new operations require.

The company's office occupies an old salmon-processing facility, just across the Skagit River from the picturesque town of La Conner. White boxes printed with red and black images of leaping salmon from the old Swinomish-run salmon company, Native Catch, still line the hallways. Retired salmon-canning machines, which Thomas likens to giant pressure cookers, sit empty. Native Catch shuttered in 2016, after decades of declining salmon stocks. A lot of fishermen and women retrofitted their boats for crab and shrimp, and salmon went from being an everyday staple to something that was stored in a communal fridge and reserved for special occasions like weddings, funerals and ceremonies.

Laura Wilbur, a Swinomish tribal member who now works for the shellfish company, spent her childhood playing at the site, which her grandfather helped build, when it still dealt in salmon. Now, she's one of a handful of full-time employees at the Swinomish Shellfish Company. "I'm excited to work somewhere where I can give back to my community," she said, standing by the storefront where the company sells fresh oysters to the public on Fridays, her long waders pulled up thigh-high.

The shellfish company also sells its oysters at gas stations around the reservation for around a buck a piece. The oysters are becoming a mainstay at community gatherings. "Swinomish Fish Company is not just about revenue for the tribe," Thomas said. During the pandemic, the tribe worked to help alleviate food insecurity in the community. Along with a box of basic staples and fresh produce, sourced from a local farm, it provided more traditional food as well: oysters, cleaned and ready to eat, fresh from Puget Sound.

This article originally appeared in High Country News and is reprinted by permission. Reporting for this story was supported by the Society of Environmental Journalists.

From seed to sourdough: *How one bakery is connecting an island ecosystem*

By Sarah Diane Reeves, guest contributor

For thousands of years, before the industrialization of agriculture, landrace grains fed the world. Generations of farmers planted seed out, harvested and planted seed out again. Over time, natural variation and seed exchange created highly diverse, hyper-localized, and inherently resilient populations.

Rather than selectively bred and privately owned seed varieties, a landrace grain is a population that might include 10,000 or more genetically different individuals, said Nathan Hodges of Barn Owl Bakery on Lopez Island.

In their small business on Lopez, some 60 miles northwest of Seattle, Hodges and co-owner Sage Dilts hope to re-establish an island-sized version of that world. In the old sawmill-turned-gallery-turned-bakery where they also raise their children, nestled on the north end of the island's 29 square miles, they're creating a modern bakery that attempts to operate in the environmental harmony of a past age.

By its nature, Barn Owl can't be scaled up. It can't be transplanted to another community. It can't feed the world.

But what it can do—feed its own community, from seed to sourdough—can be shared widely, evolved and adapted elsewhere.

"Our bakery is seated in a place that has healthy agricultural practices around it," said Dilts. "Could everybody live this way? Could it be sustainable for 8 billion people? In a lot of ways, no. We still have to make money, we have a mortgage. But what are the limits we can put on the way that we do it so that we walk a path of low impact?"

The path's beginning

Before landing in the San Juan islands, the couple lived in Berkeley during the Bay Area's sourdough renaissance in the early 2000s. With Sally Fallon's influential cookbook "Nourishing Traditions" as one guiding light, Dilts read about traditional foods and healthy food systems.

She learned sourdough from Eduardo Morell, who baked whole grain loaves in a wood-fired oven and sold them to a small customer base—an attractive business model.

"You have low overhead, low input, low tech," she said. "You're baking for your community and that sustains you economically and sustains the health of the community."

When Hodges' graduate work led them to Lopez, Dilts kept baking. She shared fresh loaves at a small yoga studio, then a village café.

"A friend suggested I start selling them at the farmers market. I put out like 40 loaves and they were gone really fast," she said. The world of bread was widening, the island population was growing, and residents were excited about whole grain sourdough.

"We could fill a need in this community, which felt like the way to be able to live here. So we stayed."

In 2013 she attended Washington State University's Kneading Conference, just across the water in Mount Vernon, an outgrowth of the new and influential "Bread Lab" at the university bringing new attention to regional grains and breads.

She heard from farmers who were interested in growing new varieties of grain but who felt "there wasn't a market for them unless they met really specific bakery requirements." She wondered if they couldn't flip the narrative: Could bakers instead learn how to use grains that grew best in a region?



Photos by Sarah Diane Reeves



The question came at a fortunate time and place.

A climate pocket

A few years before the couple's arrival, the Lopez Community Land Trust had funded a grain production project with the goal of improving food security on the island. Lopez falls within the Olympic rain shadow, which according to grain specialist O.J. Lougheed creates a climate pocket "perfect for growing the seeds of adapted crops needed for self-reliance."

Sixteen varieties of wheat were planted in several locations on Lopez. One farmer transformed a semitruck trailer into a seed vault. Grain infrastructure expanded to include two flour mills, a hand-cracked silage maker, a small seed cleaner and a grain CSA.

"This was all happening separate from us, but it was creating an environment that we were just going to be able to use," said Dilts.

"From the beginning, working with farmers on the island, we bought all of the grain they grew," said Hodges. The pair learned more about how wheat is grown and worked alongside farmers to achieve higher quality milling grains.

"Grain grown on the island is a completely different ingredient than grain grown in the Midwest, or Eastern Washington," he said. "As it turns out, some qualities that are supposedly necessary for good bread are only necessary in a more industrialized process. A hand-based, long-fermentation process doesn't need quite the same characteristics."

A bigger question eventually emerged: how to grow wheat in a way that's good for the soil and the health of the consumer.

"I think that's still a pretty open question," said Hodges. "How do we move forward in a way that we feel good about as moral, ethical human beings? How do we run a business, bake bread, raise a family, and

be part of this community in ways that are actively beneficial to all of those aspects?"

And yet, there were many ways to start.

Becoming more involved in seed selection, Barn Owl assumed stewardship of the island's seed library. They sought new varieties, which were actually very old varieties, and began planting their own fields—first by hand and then with equipment scaled appropriately for more acreage.

"A lot of our seeds were collected from landraces in the late 1800s into the early 1900s," said Hodges. "We check them out of seed banks and put them in our fields and let them adapt and evolve to this place, to Lopez."

This practice isn't about going back in time. It's about picking up where these seeds left off and building a healthier, more resilient grain economy today.

"We've really taken on the role of seed farm," said Hodges. "We'll trial a variety, and if it grows well here, we'll expand that seed until we have enough to bake a loaf of bread. If it bakes well and has good flavor, we'll expand the seed until we have enough to give to a farmer. Every year there are challenges, but we have successfully expanded a handful of seeds, a couple square feet, into 10 acres. In 10 or 15 years, we hope to have a population that is very adapted to this place, this community."

"And has great flavor," he added. "Because at the end of the day, we're a bakery, and it's got to taste good."

Local character

It's not only local grain that makes each Barn Owl baked good uniquely Lopezian. The grain is cleaned, stone milled and stored on-island. Everything baked at Barn Owl takes on the character of their wild sourdough culture—they don't use any commercial yeast or chemical leaveners. Their wood-fired ovens are even fueled with Lopez-grown biofuel: "Our island forests are second, third and fourth growth trees and need thinning to

reduce fuel load, create diversity and increase timber quality," the website reads.

Ultimately, it all comes back to the soil. Hodges said they consider the health of the soil one of the bakery's bottom lines. Every year they measure the organic matter in their fields and research better ways to build soil health in a closed-loop system, one that doesn't require outside fertilizers or other inputs. Hodges calls it "adaptive management."

"Our organic matter tends to stay consistent year after year, but we haven't been doing this for very long," he said. "It's difficult to say, 'My actions had this clear reaction in the field.'"

Nuance abounds. For example, cover cropping is great for the soil, but it requires at least twice the acreage—leaving one field fallow requires having another to keep in production.

"We know that the number one driver of carbon leaving a field, or offgassing, is temperature. So we keep our fields covered in the summer, and we plow in the winter when it's very cold and there's not very much activity. So, hopefully, very little carbon is lost."

"We look at the organic matter in the soil, and we also ask how valuable that is," said Hodges. "I've found that if you only sample the top foot of a field, then no-till fields store a lot more carbon. But if you sample the top meter of a field, plowed fields generally store the same amount under similar management regimes. So I've been exploring different metrics."

That's just field carbon. They also take into account larger agricultural carbon footprints.

"We don't water our fields—we just rely on rainfall," said Hodges. "We don't use imported fertilizers or any sort of chemicals. Our goal is to find a system that produces all the fertility that we need in the field."

In many ways, Barn Owl works the way it does because of its location. A deeply placed-based operation, it isn't necessarily designed to be replicated. Also noteworthy: The wealth of Barn Owl's customer base is no small part of their success. In 2019 average per capita personal income in San Juan County was \$76,749, well above state and U.S. averages.

"Local food is eaten in large part by people who have more choices when it comes to spending. There's also more room there for change," said Dilts. "It needs to be about shifting landscapes, shifting food availability, subsidizing food the way that bad food is subsidized. We're seeing examples of that on Lopez—there was a huge effort to give away food, support local businesses to make the food, and then give it to people that need it."

They have learned a lot from farmers who've been growing grain for years. At the same time, Hodges said, "there aren't a lot of models for what we want to do."

"That might be for a good reason," he added, laughing. "Maybe what we want to do doesn't work."

So why try it?

"Is it proof of concept? Is it just for fun? Is it to make the world a better place? I think we're just deeply driven by a curiosity about humans' relationship to this planet," said Hodges.

Added Dilts: "It's a relationship that says, 'We belong here. It's where we come from and we should operate like we are good parts of nature.'"

Sarah Reeves is a Lopez Island writer and Northwest native.

How a summer camp connected food with the Earth

By Delaney Sump, guest contributor



Off the coast of north-west Washington lie the beautiful San Juan Islands. This group of serene, sparsely inhabited islands draws whale watchers, kayakers and cyclists galore in the summertime when the sapphire-blue waters of Lopez Sound and the Rosario Strait sparkle with sunlight.

Humble Johns Island in the northwest corner of the archipelago acts as home base to Camp Nor'wester. This rustic 86-year-old summer camp is one of the San Juans' greatest but lesser-known treasures; campers stay for a whole month to build community, resilience, life skills and proficiency in the outdoors.

A good friend of mine from college spent almost every childhood summer at Nor'wester as a camper and convinced me to apply with her to work on staff after our sophomore year. The spirit of camp intoxicated me, and I returned the following summer as well as the next to lead the outdoor cooking and gardening activities. Just as campers frequently cite their sessions as the most anticipated weeks of the year, I had the experience of a lifetime guiding kids toward understanding the integral connection between food, the earth and our own sense of wellbeing.

As the outdoor cooking instructor, I planned and led daily cooking activities with groups of campers ages 9 through 16.

Our tools were far more limited than their home kitchens—or my own—including a campfire pit, a four-burner Coleman camp stove, and an Adobe-style brick oven heated with fire. Camper favorites from the open firepit included cauliflower crust pizzas cooked in mini cast iron ovens, and spiced potatoes, onions and garlic dug from the camp garden, wrapped in foil and roasted in the coals. Vegetable curries, homemade donuts and banana pancakes were crowd-pleasers from the camp stove. And in the adobe oven, our dishes included homemade pizza and Cheese-Its, roasted vegetables, and blackberry crisp made with freshly picked berries from the island.

I also worked as one of the gardeners in charge of tending Nor'wester's kitchen garden and leading regular activities. My co-gardener and I guided campers in figuring out which crops were ready to pick and teaching methods of harvesting. Campers also helped us water, weed and spread compost made entirely of food scraps from the camp kitchen (one of Nor'wester's many inspiring methods of minimizing its environmental impact).

I especially enjoyed weaving conversation into activities that expanded upon cooking and gardening to incorporate concepts related to sustainability, health and wellbeing. Talking to campers about whole foods, farm-to-table cooking, sustainability, how food makes us feel, and why it's so special to grow and cook our own food remain my favorite memories of those activities. Campers never failed to surprise me with their genuine interest in these deeper topics.

I remember one particularly toasty July day, the Troubadours (one of the eldest units of campers) arrived at the garden for an activity, and we ended up sitting in the shade of the garden shed all afternoon while I read aloud from my book of human emotions. We talked about how emotions impact us, some of the emotions brought up when working with plants in the garden, and how we feel at camp compared to the rest of our lives.

Another kid-friendly idea might be decorating a small compost bin to leave on the counter for food scraps

I hope those conversations and experiences have stuck with campers and informed their way of moving through the world, even just a little bit. Teaching young people about the value of growing their own food was incredibly special. I loved sharing my passion for food, health and the earth with campers, as well as the challenge of creating interesting activities and recipes that would engage a wide variety of ages.

I loved initiating conversations about the joys and benefits of cooking with whole foods, how good it is for our planet to eat locally grown produce, and how good it is for our souls to connect more deeply with what we eat. As a future registered dietitian, these are the same values and themes that I anticipate guiding my nutrition work. I always knew I wanted to help people feel better through food, but my time at Nor'wester allowed me to see the deeper impact I could have as a nutrition professional. Discussing the inherent connection between food, the earth and our own wellbeing with campers helped me realize that I want to angle my nutrition practice through this same lens and have similar conversations with my future clients. I also want to contribute to sustainability initiatives in food systems and agriculture that will support the health of our planet as well as the health of the people and other creatures who call it home.

Not everyone gets to have a Nor'wester summer. Money, logistics and other limitations can be significant barriers to this and many other sleepaway camps. And yet every

child can experience a little Nor'wester magic by sharing honest, thought-provoking conversations, trying new things, and learning more about themselves and the world around them.

To start down that path with children, consider trying new gardening or cooking activities at home. If you don't already have a garden, find a gardening-for-kids book at the library and thumb through it with your little ones to gather inspiration, then try planting your own patch of vegetables. Starting small with windowsill herbs can be an affordable, accessible way to begin growing ingredients you would otherwise buy from the store. Another kid-friendly idea might be decorating a small compost bin to leave on the counter for food scraps, or go bigger by creating your own Nor'wester-style compost pile outside. Start with old leaves or yard clippings, dig up some worms to add, then toss in grass trimmings, food scraps and coffee grounds year-round. Come springtime, use your compost to enhance the health of the soil in your garden or yard. On the cooking end, get your kids involved with planning meals for the week, let them browse through your recipe books, take them grocery shopping, or simply share conversations about how food makes them feel—in the shade or the sun, your choice.

Starting discussions about where food comes from and the benefits of growing our own food encourages children to be mindful when eating and to think about what they're putting into their bodies. Beyond this, it helps them grow into environmentally conscious adults who harbor an awareness and appreciation of the connection between food and the earth. That's a value Nor'wester instilled in me, and one I wish for us all to hold closely as we move through the world.

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[NEWS BITES]

Toxin levels

One in three people across America have detectable levels of a toxic herbicide linked to cancers, birth defects and hormonal imbalances, a major nationwide survey has found. Human exposure to the herbicide 2,4-D has substantially risen amid expanding use among farmers despite a multitude of health and environmental concerns, according to the first nationally representative study evaluating the footprint of the chemical. The study, published online in Environmental Health, found exposure was not uniform, with several subgroups including children aged 6 to 11 and women of childbearing age showing substantially higher levels of 2,4-D in their urine. (*New York Magazine*)

Washington wines

Bulk wine prices in Washington have climbed as out-of-state winemakers come to shop, while loosening pandemic restrictions have restored some on-premise demand and loyal drinkers seem to be trading up for more expensive bottles. That's the good news for the Washington wine industry, according to market experts during the "State of the Industry" session of WineVit, the convention marketed and organized by the Washington Winegrowers Association. The bad news? Wine continues to lose ground in the retail market to spirits, and sales of bottles in the most common price ranges are dropping. (*GoodFruit.com*)

Museum dedicated to Mexican food

LA Plaza Cocina, the first museum dedicated to Mexican food and an extension of LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes, a cultural space in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles that hosts events, exhibits and programs that celebrate Mexican cultures, opened on February 7. LA Cocina, which boasts a modern kitchen complete with a large iron comal as the centerpiece, plans to be an interactive venue for local chefs and traditional cooks, a place to host cooking demos as well as accommodate private events. The museum's first exhibit offers a window into the foundation of Mexico's indigenous heritage of corn. (*la.eater.com*)

New potato variety

A team of scientists led by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) researchers and their partners from Peru have created a new potato variety that is frost tolerant, making the crop more resilient to unpredictable climate shifts. The team evaluated potato species from the U.S. Potato Genebank for frost tolerance, ultimately selecting *Solanum acaule* and *Solanum commersonii*, both wild potatoes native to South America. The team combined these two species and evaluated the hybrids, selecting those that both withstood snap frosts and developed tolerance to much colder frosts; after years of testing, one of the thousands of offspring was selected to become a new cultivar named Wiñay. (*ars.usda.gov*)

Hemp survey

Results are in for USDA's first hemp acreage and production survey, which was sent to growers last fall to collect benchmark data for the newly regulated crop. Industrial hemp was worth \$824 million in 2021, according to the inaugural report published Feb. 17 by the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Unsurprisingly, hemp flowers used largely to extract CBD and other cannabinoids made up roughly three-quarters of the crop's total value. (*CapitalPress.com*)

French dressing deregulated

After more than 70 years, the federal government has decided that French dressing no longer needs to be regulated. "When the standard of identity was established in 1950, French dressing was one of three types of dressings we identified," the Food and Drug Administration said in the final rule posted in the Federal Register. The other two were mayonnaise and just "salad dressing." (*NPR.org*)

Trade aid inequities

USDA distributed a small percentage of payments to farmers of color, veterans and new farmers under former President Donald Trump's trade aid program in 2018 and 2019, according to a nonpartisan government report. The agency's Market Facilitation Program was set up to distribute payments to farmers to offset losses from Trump's trade war with China, a major buyer of U.S. agricultural goods, but was unevenly implemented, the Government Accountability Office reported. It paid "historically underserved farmers," including new, female, veteran and minority farmers, a combined \$818 million across the two years, or 3.6% of the total \$23 billion it disbursed, the report said. (*Reuters*)

Seafood grants

USDA will invest approximately \$50 million in grants to support seafood processors, processing facilities and processing vessels through the Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety Block Grant Program. This grant funding, to be distributed through state agencies, will help defray costs incurred by seafood processing facilities and processing vessels preparing for, preventing exposure to, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Locally, the Washington State Department of Agriculture received a \$2.4 million grant from the program. (*USDA*)

processing facilities and processing vessels preparing for, preventing exposure to, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Locally, the Washington State Department of Agriculture received a \$2.4 million grant from the program. (*USDA*)

Gas stoves impact

A new Stanford-led study reveals that the methane leaking from natural gas-burning stoves inside U.S. homes has a climate impact comparable to the carbon dioxide emissions from about 500,000 gasoline-powered cars. This extra warming from home methane leaks contributes about a third as much warming as the carbon dioxide generated by combustion of the stove's natural gas, and sometimes exposes users to respiratory disease-triggering pollutants. The findings, published in Environmental Science & Technology, come as legislators in numerous U.S. municipalities and at least one state—New York—weigh banning natural gas hookups from new construction. (*news.Stanford.edu*)

Caged farming ban

The European (EU) Commission recently committed to banning caged farming in Europe. The proposal will cover animals including various chicken species, calves and rabbits and will go into full effect by 2027. Several EU Member States have already implemented full or partial bans on caged farming for egg-laying hens in France, for sows in Sweden and rabbits in Austria. (*FoodTank.com*)

Hope for rare plant

Wildfires, invasive species and climate change are seriously threatening the Hanford Reach National Monument, and with it, a rare plant that grows only in one place in the world. This winter, a team of plant researchers is giving the Umatum desert buckwheat new hope. Researchers and volunteers planted a second outcropping at the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy near Yakima. (*OPB.org*)

Plastics on land

While much of the public's attention—and funding for scientific research—has been funneled into efforts that focus on the impact of plastics in marine environments, the ones in our soils may be just as serious a problem. According to a recent report by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, the earth's soils may be more saturated with plastic pollution than oceans, and an estimated 80% of plastics found in marine environments are first disposed of on land. The report announces the first global call for action to protect agricultural

soils from plastic pollution based on the "6R principle" for sustainable plastic use, which involves refusing, redesigning, reducing, reusing, recycling and recovering plastics. (*CivilEats.com*)

Farming overtime

The New York Farm Laborer Wage Board agreed to set a path to a 40-hour work week for farm workers in New York, a landmark decision that was swiftly criticized by the agricultural industry and the Republican Party. The decision, a 2-to-1 vote of the panel, would lower the current 60-hour overtime threshold for farm laborers over a 10-year period, which would reach 40 hours by 2032. The board agreed to lower the threshold by four hours per week every two years beginning in 2024. (*TimesUnion.com*)

Wind power and wildlife

Washington's shrub-steppe, with its critical wildlife habitat, faces potential encroachment by wind turbines and solar panel farms. Lots of them. And these alternative energy developments are setting up a surprising environmental conflict between cleaner energy and preserving the land as wildlife habitat, sometimes pitting environmentalists against other environmentalists. (*Crosscut.com*)

Meat alternatives report

If plant-based meat alternatives continue to expand at their current rate, they will represent 6% of total meat consumption by 2030 — which means that manufacturers will need to produce 25 million metric tons of the products per year to meet demand, according to an analysis by The Good Food Institute. The report projects that to get there, the world would need at least 800 extrusion factories, each of which is able to produce at least 30,000 metric tons of extruded protein product per year, representing a total investment of \$27 billion. (*FoodDive.com*)

Almond irrigation issues

When salty groundwater is used to irrigate almond orchards, production can be significantly reduced and the damage to trees can last for years, according to ARS studies. Years of droughts in central California, the primary growing region for the state's \$6 billion almond industry, have forced producers to draw ever deeper from aquifers to replace limited higher-quality surface water to quench thirsty almond trees. As groundwater levels have declined with pumping and drought, the quality of extracted groundwater in some areas also has declined as wells have had to reach deeper into levels with sediments of higher salinity. (*ars.usda.gov*)

Farmers markets focus on neighborhood cultures and “food deserts”

By Naomi Tomky, guest contributor

On Tuesdays in South Park, locals grab free limes and buy Salvadorean baked goods as they browse handmade Mexican jewelry and pay-what-you-can produce. Wednesdays in Tukwila, shoppers stop by refugee-owned stands for whole pepper plants, maize and amaranth. And every other Saturday in Delridge, families picnic on jollof rice as they stock up on bitter greens and Haitian pikliz. Often for the first time, neighbors are both shopping for fresh produce in their community and finding the vegetables and dishes they know and love at a farmers market stand.

The three Seattle-area farmers markets run by separate nonprofits show how a dual focus on supporting vendors and centering the local community creates culturally relevant food access and fills much-needed voids in underserved neighborhoods. But these markets also run into a variety of barriers, from systemic challenges for their vendors to haggling over the surprisingly important legal definition of the term “farmers market.”

All three markets—the Tukwila Farmers Market, South Delridge Farmers Market and El Mercadito Farmers Market, entering their fourth, second and first full seasons, respectively—focus on neighborhoods dubbed “food deserts” by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), meaning at least one-third of the community lives more than a half-mile from a grocery store. “We call it a food apartheid zone,” says Rachel Perlot, the director of fund development and food access at the African Community and Housing Development (ACHD), which runs South Delridge. (The organization received a 2021 PCC Community Grant to help support the market.)

“(The zone) is not a natural occurrence. It happened because humans made it happen,” she said. And the issue runs deeper than just the geography of supermarkets: “It’s also tied with access to land and access to wealth. Local food is awesome. But who has the privilege to be growing local food in the first place?”

A training ground

The Food Innovation Network (FIN), which runs the Tukwila market, works with New Roots, an International Rescue Committee urban agriculture program for refugees, immigrants and asylees (people who are seeking or have been granted political asylum), to ameliorate that issue. FIN started in 2017 by selling produce grown by New Roots farmers under a consignment model for 10 weeks inside a local YMCA. The main feedback they received from the community was “Don’t close.”

It also served as training for growers to operate their own farmstand, explains Kara Martin, the program director at FIN—demonstrating skills like how to bunch greens and get produce ready to sell. By 2019, Krishna and Nir Biswa, a couple from Nepal who sold produce from their Namuna Garden through the program, graduated to their own stand. They were followed last year by Beatrice Shimirimana and Assumani, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who sell from their farm, Umoja N’inguvu, transforming the farmstand into the current four-stand Tukwila Farmers Market.

“A lot of the folks we work with, English is not their first language, and so dealing with bureaucratic systems like public health, or WSDA (the Washington State Department of Agriculture) is super intimidating and not intuitive,” says Perlot. She found it eye-opening to guide the market and its vendors through barriers built into so many different layers of the system: One vendor waited a full year for a facility inspection just to get licensed by



the state department of agriculture to sell her Caribbean-style jams.

Even if a vendor navigated these barriers alone, finding places to sell adds another challenge—many big markets have long waitlists and charge hefty stall fees. These three markets flip that script to make sure farmers get paid. South Delridge purchases any remaining produce at the end of each market to package and distribute to community elders who can’t attend the market because of mobility or transportation issues, while Tukwila and El Mercadito pay stipends to the vendors.

Our goal is to get food into people’s hands, and we don’t really care how that happens

“The most important aspect of our market was to build trust,” says Crystal Brown, the executive director of Cultivate South Park (CSP), which runs El Mercadito. The stipends played a part in that. “It was an intentional push of our market director and the team to bring in the most diversity that we could. We wanted to bring in newer businesses.”

That market director, South Park resident Mónica Pérez, created what grew into El Mercadito in an effort to help her neighbors access culturally appropriate food. It began as a mutual aid event, offering tomatillos, chile peppers and masa for making tortillas—in the style of a farmers market. The current version features the concept as one of its many stalls, and Pérez serves as CSP’s food director.

Until the second world war, Japanese and Italian farmers grew the produce sold elsewhere in the city in Seattle’s South Park

neighborhood, making it particularly cruel that the now-heavily-Latinx neighborhood had no grocery store and little access to fresh produce. Difficult-to-navigate governmental programs designed to help rarely provided ingredients for the kind of dishes these families cooked for generations. “I’m constantly venting about how inaccessible and, honestly, racist a lot of our food access programs are,” says Perlot. “All you have to do is look at the WIC shopping guide that tells you what you can and can’t buy with dollars and there you go.” For example: it includes a wide variety of cheddar and Colby cheeses but specifically excludes both cotija and queso fresco, two staples of Mexican cuisine.

In Tukwila, Umoja N’inguvu sells a maize specific to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Namuna Gardens grows pumpkins, but for an audience more focused on the leaves and seeds than the squash itself. Vegetables are harvested at different sizes or in different styles, says Martin, because people use them for different purposes. At South Delridge, vendors specialize in the bitter greens and spicy peppers that power the cuisines of the African diaspora.

Perlot hopes to add a vendor selling fresh halal meat this year—just the type of food that inspired the market. Students at Hope Academy, which hosts the market, conducted conversations with the community as part of an environmental and food justice curriculum. They ascertained what the diverse neighborhood most needed was access to culturally relevant food and tasked the ACHD with making it happen.

Breaking barriers

Like FIN, the main issue ACHD identified after the first season was that it needs to happen more often. “It’s hard for people to build it into their routine,” says Perlot. “Once a month is not often enough for fresh produce.” The overwhelming need filled by these markets gets magnified when they provide additional assistance: ACHD works

with a variety of government programs—SNAP Market Match, EBT, WIC, Fresh Bucks—but it also runs its own low barrier program: free bags of produce that anyone can just grab, no questions asked—and because everyone does, nobody needs to “out themselves” as poor. “We know that there’s stigma and shame around poverty and food insecurity,” she says. “Our goal is to get food into people’s hands, and we don’t really care how that happens.”

At El Mercadito, the mutual aid stand gives away produce with a specifically worded sign instructing customers to take what they’ll use, rather than what they need, says Brown. “People confuse need with, ‘If I need it, that means I’m absolutely poor and I’m crawling across the floor.’” Someone might use a few free lemons to make lemonade, but few categorize that as a need. The booth takes care not to offer anything a farmer sells at the market, but some farmers also created their own sliding scale.

Two-thirds of the customers at the Tukwila Farmers Market come via incentives (like EBT and similar), says Market Manager Faizah Shukru. But accepting those government programs meant jumping through more hoops: programs like SNAP Market Match require qualifying as a farmers market, for which the legal parameters include a minimum of five growers selling produce directly to customers. Tukwila has just four total stands, South Delridge six or seven including cooked food and a henna vendor, and even El Mercadito, the largest of the three, doesn’t quite qualify yet, because its 14 stands include handi-crafts, cooked food, processed food, and a mutual aid booth giving away free donated produce. “Farmers markets are awesome,” says Perlot. “But those markets are built to support farmers, and our farming system in the U.S. is, at its core, inequitable.”

For more markets like these—providing opportunities to new, smaller and more diverse vendor pools and creating barrier-free access to food that communities want, need and will use—FIN’s Martin says, “We need to step out of thinking that a farmers market needs to be a certain way.” Though the typical farmers markets in the area were helpful to the upstarts, the definition they stand behind creates yet another barrier, even among groups whose missions and goals are aligned: supporting local growers and connecting communities to local foods that they want. “We’ve become really prescriptive of what a farmers market should be,” says Martin. “That is keeping communities from being able to be a part of a farmers market.”

For more widespread success, the wider population and government regulations need to break down barriers with the same passion as the organizations running the markets. Markets look different all over the world, points out Martin. But they mostly share one thing: like these three, they reflect and represent the community around them.

Naomi Tomky (naomitomky.com), author of “The Pacific Northwest Seafood Cookbook,” writes about food and travel.

For more information and for market schedules, see:

- **DELDRIDGE FARMERS MARKET** (pccmarkets.com/r/6120)
- **EL MERCADITO FARMERS MARKET** (pccmarkets.com/r/6121)
- **TUKWILA FARMERS MARKET** (pccmarkets.com/r/6122)