

S O U N D C O N S U M E R

Secrets of shopping the bulk bins

By Rebekah Denn

Smart grocery shopping advice almost always includes a suggestion to shop the bulk bins. The floor-to-ceiling containers filled with grains, nuts, spices and more are usually hailed as a way to save money—and they often are!

Their benefits, though, go beyond the dollar savings.

PCC was an early pioneer in bulk sales (see page 3)—after all, the co-op was originally founded as a bulk buying club in 1953. As we celebrate our 70th anniversary this year, here’s an update on what bulk bins can offer in 2023, and tips for how they can benefit your kitchen and home.

Variety

A well-stocked bulk section provides a lot of choice, frequently offering more options than packages on the shelf. At PCC’s Green Lake Aurora store, for just one example, the bulk section offers 17 different kinds of rice, from organic red rice to forbidden rice to sushi rice to long-grain brown rice. Oats are available in every form from quick rolled oats (which are finely cut and cook faster than other varieties) all the way up to whole oat groats and oat bran.

Dried pinto beans? Check. White chia seeds? Those too. Lapsang Souchong tea leaves, dulse (seaweed) granules, slippery elm bark powder, tamari-roasted almonds, Lavender Lullaby bath salts? All of the above. PCC stores generally stock more than 400 bulk items, with some variations depending on store size and layout.

Fresh flavors

In well-stocked stores the contents of bulk bins turn over quickly and may be fresher than packages on the shelves. Nuts, oats and flour are generally refilled every day or two, and coffee might be refilled twice daily, said grocery merchandiser Noah Smith. The benefits don’t come any fresher than the single-ingredient nut butters that shoppers can grind on the spot like coffee. For bulk peanut butter, PCC uses organic CB’s nuts, which are grown in the U.S. and roasted in small batches in Kingston, Wash. All stores also carry almond



butter grinders filled with organic almonds from Equal Exchange’s Burroughs Farm in California, the first almond farm certified as Regenerative Organic by the Regenerative Organic Alliance.

More than food

PCC offers many health and body care items in bulk at selected stores, from protein powders to rosewater to liquid soaps to hair care. (The West Seattle, Ballard and Kirkland stores have expanded bulk sections for the largest selection of these items.)

Reduce packaging waste

Thanks to recent changes in state regulations supported by PCC, shoppers can use their own clean reusable containers for many bulk foods, which reduces use of plastic bags and twist-ties. (Have the cashier weigh your containers before filling them.) Due to health department regulations, reusable containers still can’t be used for some bulk items, most notably foods it classifies as “ready-to-eat” in scoop bins, including herbs and spices, sugar and oats.

Plastics use is also slashed by using selected bulk goods where PCC has established “closed loop” packaging (see pccmarkets.com/r/6290). For those items, containers are returned to manufacturers to be cleaned and reused rather than discarded or recycled. Moon Valley liquid soaps are delivered in 5-gallon buckets that are cleaned and reused on the farm. The owner of Shephard Moon delivers bulk Epsom salts in 10-pound reusable bags.

Organics

Around 65% of PCC’s bulk items are certified organic by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Organic items get precedence in selections, Smith said, supplemented with non-organic items for lower-priced options, unique offerings, or to fill gaps where organic items aren’t available.

Shopping small

Bulk bins let shoppers buy just the quantities they’ll need for a recipe or to sample a product, rather than leaving lots

of leftovers that might go bad or stale. This is especially relevant for items like nuts and whole-grain flours, which turn rancid with long storage. Small quantities are also valuable for shoppers with limited pantry space for extras.

Goldie Caughlan, PCC’s former nutrition education manager, told Seattle’s Museum of History and Industry in a 2004 oral history, “When you hear the word bulk, 20 years ago we used to talk about buying a large amount, and that that was a way of saving money.” Over time she came to realize buying huge amounts of food wasn’t necessarily the best way to either save money or preserve nutrients. “It’s far more important to think in terms of being able to buy (a) little.”

Shopping big

That said, some shoppers, especially those with large families or other super-sized cooking commitments, do need hefty

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Bellevue, WA 98004

BOTHELL

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Bothell, WA 98021

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

[LETTERS to the editor]

Letters must be 250 words or less and include a name and hometown. 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. Please email letters to editor@pccmarkets.com.

COMPOST OR RECYCLE?

Where on the PCC website does it talk about whether containers are compostable or recyclable? What about the “cardboard” boxes that food is put in at the deli?

PCC replies: Thank you for asking how to recycle specific containers. We appreciate that you want to make sure they are disposed of properly! The disposal guide for all our PCC packaging is online at pccmarkets.com/r/6292. For general materials the city of Seattle has a helpful guide at pccmarkets.com/r/6293.

Regarding your specific questions, our deli to-go folding boxes were previously compostable, but the company we purchase them from stopped production, so we had to go back to the recyclable version. If they are clean and dry they can be recycled.

LEAD WARNING LABELS

Dear Editor,

I purchased Jovial's organic, gluten-free, grain-free pasta made from cassava flour because I wanted to reduce my glycemic intake. Imagine my surprise when I read the warning on the side of the box that said consuming this product might expose you to lead, since the tuberous root from which the flour is made pulls lead from the soil! How can this be organic? I thought PCC had stringent guidelines on all products it carries. Please explain.

Thank you,
Virginia Southas
Member 30+ years

PCC replies: Thank you for reaching out to us with your concerns about the heavy metal exposure warning on the Jovial brand pasta. The warning label is related to California's Proposition 65, which requires disclosing any risk of potential exposure to certain substances that increase risk of cancer or cause harm to the reproductive system. More information can be found on Jovial's website at pccmarkets.com/r/6294. This content was just recently added, after you reached out to us, so if you had checked Jovial's website first and didn't see this page, that is why.

Organic certification is a legally backed program that sets rules and restrictions around inputs and farming practices for growing and making agricultural products, such as food or wine. While organic is a strong standard that helps reduce your exposure to some of the most toxic pesticides and certain harmful food additives, organic foods can still be contaminated with heavy metals. Heavy metals are naturally occurring, but since humans began using them in many industrial applications and in consumer products like leaded gasoline or arsenic-based pesticides, they have been released into the environment in forms that can accumulate in water, soil and air and thus lead to the contamination of our drinking water, soils and many different foods.

That being said, PCC and many others in the organic community are pushing for stronger rules and regulations to address heavy metal contamination. We

also continue to urge federal regulators to establish stronger heavy metal testing requirements and more protective heavy metal limits for all food.

PCC has many strong standards, but the current food industry and landscape is incredibly challenging, and we do the best we can to offer less processed foods with fewer additives, prioritizing organic for the benefits that it does hold for climate and reduced exposure to fossil fuel-based pesticides. Additionally, PCC has standards and policies in place currently to limit potential contamination in some high-risk categories, like baby foods and rice. We also continue to work with leaders in this space, such as the Clean Label Project and FoodChainID to determine the best ways retailers can help move the issue forward.

Thank you again for contacting us and we hope this information is useful.

BURNING SUGARCANE

Hi! I've been a PCC customer for many years and love PCC! I always know you've vetted your products and that they meet certain standards. The one you've gotten wrong is Florida Crystals organic cane sugar.

We now divide our time between Issaquah and Southwest Florida. Unbeknownst to you, there's a huge environmental issue regarding Florida Crystals and other big sugar companies that burn their sugarcane fields every year, creating toxic air and pollutants that have endangered the health of people and wildlife. People of color and the poor are impacted the most. There is a huge environmental initiative via organizations like Friends of the Everglades to stop the annual burns and, instead, practice better techniques like in Brazil.

Here are some links to get educated on this topic. There is also a place to sign a petition to stop the burning. I know PCC cares and will perhaps let Florida Crystals know it's not consistent with your requirements for products.

pccmarkets.com/r/6295
pccmarkets.com/r/6296

Thank you in advance for your attention on this important environmental issue.

PCC replies: Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding Florida Crystals sugar and information about the very harmful practice of pre-harvest burning in the sugarcane industry in Florida.

We reached out to Florida Crystals, and they informed us that they harvest mechanically without the use of prescribed burning, which they note is prohibited under organic regulations. Florida Crystals actually has many resources on their website about their growing practices and sustainability efforts: pccmarkets.com/r/6297. However, in reviewing those materials, it is unfortunate that they don't seem to address this serious issue associated with their industry in their region. We have urged them to consider adding content that makes it very clear they do not engage in that practice, so that shoppers are not left wondering.

Additionally, we also want to let you know that PCC does already offer Whole-some sugar, which has been suggested as an alternative to Florida Crystals. We agree that Wholesome is a great brand, however, it is also more expensive. In the interest of accessibility, we try to provide options to our shoppers while always maintaining our high standards. Florida Crystals is grown, processed and packaged in the United States and certified organic, offering a quality product at a lower price point.

Thank you again for taking the time to raise these issues.

GLUTEN-FREE BUCKWHEAT

I am contacting you about the Miso, Mushroom & Soba noodle soup recipe in the latest member newsletter (pccmarkets.com/r/6298). I love this soup. You have not identified it as gluten-free. However, buckwheat is gluten-free. If one buys pure buckwheat soba noodles the soup would be gluten-free. The first time I shopped for soba noodles at PCC I discovered that one brand was pure buckwheat, which is gluten-free. Another brand, though, included wheat as well as buckwheat, and therefore is not gluten-free. I hope that the pure buckwheat brand is still available. I think your gluten-free members/customers should know this.

— Jane B.

PCC replies: Thank you for writing in about the Miso, Mushroom & Soba soup, which meets a lot of dietary needs—it is also vegan and tree-nut-free! We're glad you enjoy it and so appreciate that you want to ensure gluten-free members and customers know there are options for them to enjoy this recipe, too. We do carry Eden Soba Noodles made with 100% Buckwheat flour at most of our locations, and staff are always happy to help customers find what they need.

TOILET PAPER TRADE-OFFS

It is very disconcerting to see the expansion of Caboo (renewable bamboo) paper products at PCC, replacing other paper products made in the USA. Is the environmental cost (pollution) to ship products from China a good trade-off just to use bamboo, when many toilet papers here are made from recycled paper and not trees?

PCC replies: Thank you for asking about Caboo products. We evaluate product sustainability in many ways and try to offer a range of sustainable products so shoppers can make the best choices based on the specific priorities of their households. With Caboo, our merchandising team wanted to offer an option for paper products that were not made from trees and found that Caboo had the best quality and the most complete line. (All the bamboo-based lines they found came from China.) Caboo also offers plastic-free packaging, a bonus that is hard to find with paper products. We will certainly also continue to offer U.S.-based brands like Seventh Generation that are manufactured in North America.

COOKING CLASS IDEA

I thought you might like to know that a co-op in Minneapolis (the Seward Community Co-op) is offering a series of classes on Indigenous foods, including one on cooking with Cushaw squash, walleye and blue corn. Wish we had more ways to learn from the Indigenous cultures here. Thank you!

PCC replies: Thank you for the information! We always love hearing what class topics people are interested in seeing at PCC and consider all suggestions. You may also be interested in seeing this recent Sound Consumer article on Native American Heritage Month (pccmarkets.com/r/6299), which includes some resources on issues relevant to Indigenous people in the Northwest.

Secrets of shopping the bulk bins

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quantities of bulk goods. Bulk bins offer the option to choose whatever quantities they need, including amounts that might not be available pre-packaged. (**Note:** PCC offers a 10% discount for buying a full case or bag of any item; the quantity varies depending on the item.)

The hidden gem in the value department

Buying in large quantities also lowers the odds of running out of necessities. Health and Body Care Merchandiser Steven Jamieson noted that he always has extra dish soap on hand in the kitchen from bulk purchases. If your preferred soap is the foaming variety, he said, “save your favorite foaming soap container and refill with castile soap from the PCC bulk department once empty. The ideal ratio is ¼ castile soap to ¾ water and is fantastic for cleaning dishes—my favorite scent is the Lemon Rosemary from Moon Valley—perfect for the kitchen.”

Spice it up

Spices combine some of the best benefits of the bulk bins. They typically offer some of the biggest savings, costing a fraction of their jarred equivalents. “You’d be paying around \$4 a jar for what would cost 25 cents in bulk,” Smith said. Spices are also most aromatic and powerfully flavored when fresh-ground, benefitting from frequent smaller purchases rather than a jar that might languish in the pantry for years. (Extra bonus: You can buy spices like nutmeg whole and grate them as needed.) With pricier options like whole vanilla beans, it's an added layer of security to confirm before purchasing that they are plump and moist, rather than risking dried-out beans in a sealed jar.

Make to order

Bulk bins are a powerful palette of ingredients for creating foods just the way you like them. From granolas to cereals to trail mix or soup mixes, they offer nearly



infinite ways to mix-and-match as you like (see recipes below). Even your own herbal tea blends are options with bulk ingredients like organic dried hibiscus flowers, chamomile or peppermint leaf.

Savings

Many if not most bulk items cost less than their packaged equivalents. Spices are one highlight, but Smith noted that bulk oils (available at some PCC stores) are the “hidden gem in the value department,” often priced dollars cheaper per pint than bottled oils.

Information online

Wondering how to cook a particular bulk item like falafel mix or French green lentils? Wondering about their nutritional data? PCC's website has a search function (pccmarkets.com/r/6291) providing that information for all bulk items. Bonus: Unsure whether that bag in your pantry is spelt flour or multigrain pancake mix? Simply type in the bin number into the bulk search for the correct ID.

Whole Grains, Nuts and Seeds Granola

Makes about 1 quart (8 [¾-cup] servings)

¾ cups rolled oats (not quick-cooking)
½ cup unsweetened coconut flakes
¼ cup flaxseeds
½ cup raw nuts (your favorite variety)
¼ cup white sesame seeds
¼ cup sunflower seeds
1 teaspoon kosher salt
¼ cup high-heat oil, such as sunflower or refined peanut oil
½ cup honey
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups dried fruit, chopped into bite-size pieces

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, combine the oats, coconut, flaxseeds, nuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, salt, oil, honey and vanilla.

Spread the mixture on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring three times during the baking process. The granola should be a toasted golden brown.

Cool the granola completely before stirring in the dried fruit. Store in an

airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 months.

Note: Granola can be a great way to simply use up the odds and ends in your pantry, but if you want to make a special batch, here are some favorite dried fruit and nut combinations. With larger dried fruits like figs and mango slices, it's best to cut them into bite-size pieces before adding them to the granola.

- Hazelnuts and dried cranberries
- Pecans and dried peaches
- Pistachios and dried cherries
- Walnuts and dried apples
- Sliced almonds and dried mangoes
- Whole almonds and dried figs
- Macadamia nuts and dried apricots

From “Cooking from Scratch” by PCC Community Markets (Sasquatch Books, \$24.95)

Instant Pot Red Lentil Soup

This recipe is lightly adapted from Madhur Jaffrey's “My Mother's Red Lentil Soup” in her cookbook, “Madhur Jaffrey's Instantly Indian Cookbook” (Alfred A. Knopf, \$22). Jaffrey's original includes wedges of lime or lemon, plus finely chopped cilantro to sprinkle on top. In all honesty, Jaffrey says both those ingredients are essential—but we think the soup is excellent without them too, and omitting them means all ingredients are shelf-stable (and available in bulk). The recipe makes a great last-minute meal backup. The quantity of spices can be adjusted to your tastes.

Makes 4 servings

1 cup red lentils, well-rinsed
¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
¼ teaspoon ground clove
¾ teaspoon chili powder
¾ teaspoons salt

Place all ingredients in the inner container of an Instant Pot or other electric multicooker along with 3.5 cups water. Close and seal the lid and cook at low pressure for 5 minutes. Release the pressure manually. Open the lid carefully, venting the steam facing away from you. Stir and thin with hot water if you prefer a thinner texture.

BULKING UP ON HISTORY

PCC was founded as a 15-family food buying club led by John Affolter in 1953 (it officially became the Puget Consumers Co-op in 1961). Bulk purchases were key both before and after its first store opened in 1967. A few early looks at its development:

- Listings in its 1965 newsletter, the predecessor to the *Sound Consumer*, priced out 10 pounds of beans and 10 pounds of unsweetened cocoa, a gallon of maple syrup and a 2-pound package of rye flour.
- Even in 1966, interest in packaging was keen, with members urging “heavier containers, longer twistee closures, and use of coffee cans.”

- A 1968 assessment hailed how, even “without a slide rule,” there was no question PCC bulk goods offered “realistic price advantages.”
- And in 1973, “an anonymous customer failed to close the spigot on the Dr. Bronner's (soap), the result is approx. five gallons of Dr. Bronner's on the Co-op floor. At \$1.11/qt, five gallons equals \$24.65 of spillage.” Two gallons of molasses were lost the same way. “It is fortunate that molasses flows slow in January, but it still is a good reminder to bulk liquid users to be sure the spigots are all the way closed.” (PCC still carries several types of bulk Dr. Bronner's, though the containers are now better secured.)

The weight of new Lunar New Year traditions

By Hsiao-Ching Chou, guest contributor

I've always said my favorite holiday is Lunar New Year, through all the different forms it's taken in my life. As an immigrant child growing up in central Missouri, the holiday was a way to connect to my family's Chinese culture. As a journalist and cookbook author, Lunar New Year has been a means to share stories and teach audiences about our traditions. As a parent and aunt, the holiday rituals and the sumptuous feast channel our legacy, memory by delicious memory.

The dinner itself is known as the reunion feast, because Lunar New Year is when people return home from wherever they are in the world. Over the years, I've written or participated in many interviews about planning the menu, shopping for ingredients, cooking all the lucky foods, presenting red envelopes filled with money, honoring elders and ancestors, and enjoying the cacophony of multiple generations at the dinner table. I even timed the publication dates of my two cookbooks to line up with Lunar New Year, which falls sometime between January 15 and February 15 (this year it is Jan. 22).

Through my adult life, our house is where everyone loves coming for the celebration, because I do all the cooking and we have the space. Also, my mother lives with us, which effectively designates our home the hub. I cook potstickers, red-braised pork belly, dry-fried green beans, and ma po tofu—all family favorites even if they're not the typical auspicious foods. I also make steamed whole fish and stir-fried lettuce for prosperity, "lucky 8" stir-fry for good fortune, long-life noodles for longevity, and any other requests from family members.

The pomp of Lunar New Year is in my bones. When a relationship with a cultural touchpoint is so deep-rooted, it's hard to imagine a different existence. But, the seismic force of these last few years taught me that even the most stalwart of convictions can waver—and traditions along with them.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the most visible pressure on our celebration, as it was for so many abiding customs worldwide.

As the pandemic systematically stripped our lives of the freedom to gather, celebrating Lunar New Year became a salvage exercise. How could I host a Lunar New Year dinner via Zoom and still convey abundance and hospitality? We are fortunate that my brothers and their families live in the area. So I created gift baskets that included home-made dumplings and scallion pancakes, tangerines, cookies, and red envelopes for the kids. We delivered them to my five nieces and nephews in advance of our Zoom. Despite those efforts, the dinner was awkward and didn't feel festive.

It wasn't just the pandemic, it was the life events that almost all families eventually face in some form.

In the background, my daughter and brother were dealing with life-threatening health issues that not only put constraints on what they could eat but demanded vigilance in their respective day-to-day routines. It was hard to focus on bringing joy when global and personal uncertainties pervaded our lives. Trying to make a holiday feast that accommodates everyone's needs without making anyone feel left out or deprived is its own matrix of complexity.

As one year became two and Lunar New Year rolled around again in 2022, I had to ask whether it was safe enough to host the family. While the world had opened up a bit,



Photo credit: Clare Barboza

virus variants were still spreading. With my youngest nephew still unable to get a vaccine, an immunocompromised brother and my elderly mom in the mix, I couldn't risk it. So I assembled and delivered trays of lucky candy, cookies, tangerines and red envelopes. These trays didn't compare to the baskets from the previous year and I knew it. Weary from it all, I didn't have the resolve to do more. There was no Zoom dinner, either.

I don't beat myself up for scaling back; it was the right thing to do. But my lingering weariness and, truth be told, unexpressed grief, make me wonder what it will take to spark new energy.

I don't have an answer.

Holiday traditions have a special way of getting folks to create expectations that sometimes grow beyond what's necessary or reasonable. Perhaps it's not about salvaging a tradition and more about letting go of what was to make room for what's to be.

What will carry me through is the enduring essence of what any new year brings: renewal. And reunion. It's the heart of the holiday, in any form.

Award-winning food journalist and cooking class instructor Hsiao-Ching Chou is the author of "Chinese Soul Food" and "Vegetarian Chinese Soul Food."

Lucky 8 Stir-Fry

Makes 4 servings

Eight is a lucky number in the Chinese culture, especially at Lunar New Year. The

Chinese word for "eight" is a homophone for prosperity, so numbers with consecutive eights in them represent "big money." This mixed vegetable dish takes its inspiration from Buddhist vegetarian cooking and can include any combination of ingredients that represent good luck, prosperity, happiness, family wholeness and longevity. The ingredients also should have contrasting yet balanced flavors and textures. You can serve this on any day of the week—especially when it's Lunar New Year. If you don't have access to dried lily flowers, you can use bamboo shoot strips (which are available canned) or tofu.

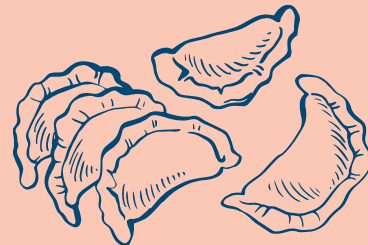
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- 3 inner stalks celery hearts, cut on the bias ¼-inch thick
- 4 to 6 medium dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked in warm water for 2 to 3 hours
- 1 medium carrot, cut into ¼-inch-thick strips
- ½ cup dried lily flowers, soaked in warm water for 30 minutes
- ½ cup dried wood ear mushrooms, soaked in warm water for 30 minutes and cut into ¼-inch-thick strips
- 1 cup sliced Chinese cabbage or baby bok choy
- 8 snow peas, trimmed and cut on the bias into ½-inch-wide pieces
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine, sherry or dry Marsala wine, optional
- 1 tablespoon water
- ¼ teaspoon sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon white pepper powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, if needed

Preheat a wok over high heat until wisps of smoke rise from the surface. Swirl in the vegetable oil and heat for a few seconds until it starts to shimmer. Add all of the vegetables: bean sprouts, celery, shiitake mushrooms, carrot, dried lily flowers, wood ear mushrooms, Chinese cabbage or baby bok choy, and snow peas. Stir-fry for about 90 seconds and then add the soy sauce, Shaoxing wine (if using) and water. Stir-fry for about 1 minute. Add the sesame oil and white pepper powder. Stir-fry for about 30 seconds more to combine. Turn off the heat. Taste for seasoning. If you think it needs a pinch of salt, add the kosher salt and stir to combine. Transfer to a serving dish.

Adapted from Vegetarian Chinese Soul Food © Hsiao-Ching Chou

Make Chinese Dumplings

Interested in trying your own Chinese dumplings for Lunar New Year? PCC cooking class instructor Elaine Sher will teach a hands-on class, sign up at pccmarkets.com/r/6300.



The Sumo orange is a new citrus star

By Camela Zarccone, guest contributor

If citrus fruits could strut into stores on celebrity red carpets, the shiranui would certainly be at the front of the line.

Don't think you've heard of it? That's because you probably only know it by its stage name, Sumo Citrus. (The generic version is also known as a dekopon.)

The large, distinctive mandarin, originally from Japan but now also grown in California, has arrived in a growing number of American grocery stores the past few years for a short selling season that starts in January and ends in April. It's also been the star of splashy marketing campaigns, as its main distributor, selling it under that trademarked Sumo Citrus name, has worked to introduce it to consumers across the country and build its popularity.

So what's all the buzz—or zest—about?

For starters, "It has a very sweet flavor, and it's a very large piece of fruit," said Sunnia Gull, director of marketing at AC Foods, the Dinuba, Calif., company that owns the Sumo brand.

Plenty of science and years of cross-breeding and cultivation went into that sweetness. The fruit's been bred to have a much higher sugar-to-acid ratio than other types of mandarins. It's also seedless and easy to peel.

Why the Sumo name? It came from the large size, combined with the distinctive knob at the top (reimagined in the minds of its marketers as more of a topknot), together with its Japanese origins.

For all its benefits, the growers who work with it behind the scenes are the first to admit that the shiranui is also more than a bit of a diva.

"It's so hard to grow," Gull lamented.

The soft, bumpy rind bred for easy peeling needs pampering and protection even while the fruit is still on the tree, requiring careful pruning to get the amount of sunlight just right, according to Gull. Sumo growers are so worried about exposing their darlings to too much sun, in fact, that they protect them with a powdery citrus sunscreen of sorts that needs to be applied to each fruit during the hottest summer months.

The Sumos are then picked by hand and tucked into small totes rather than the massive bins typically used in citrus harvesting. Next, after transport in special air-ride trailers meant to prevent a bumpy ride, the Sumos arrive at a packing house where, as Gull described it, "there is no automation involved in packing the fruit." And that's all before the mandarins have even begun the second leg of their journey, the trip to the store.

It's a labor-intensive process that helps to explain why shiranui mandarins tend to cost more than many other oranges and tangerines. Back in Japan, where they're popular enough that they've even been offered as a Hi-Chew candy flavor, their higher price tag might not matter much to consumers accustomed to regarding many fruits as luxury items. The premium raises more eyebrows among American consumers and adds a complication to the already scant supplies of organic versions of the fruit.

Price isn't the only barrier: "Pests love citrus in general, and they especially love these," said Gull, whose company currently offers only conventional Sumos. The company might eventually offer organic Sumos as well, she said. But work on an organic crop



Photos courtesy of Sumocitrus.com



is a slow process, given that the trees take five years to mature to the point of bearing fruit.

PCC will be a rare spot to locate organic shiranuis this year. Organic fruits grown at the Temecula, Calif., citrus ranch En Divina Luz, will be on sale alongside conventional Sumos this winter, according to PCC Senior Produce Merchandiser Kevin Byers. But finding other organic suppliers to work with has been a challenge.

Other citrus growers are eager to bring their own organic shiranuis to market, said Craig Morris, category director for citrus and grapes at Homegrown Organic Farms in Porterville, Calif., but their starter crops are not ready for commercial production yet.

"The dekopon is an extremely difficult and complex tree to grow correctly," Morris said. "And organically, we have very few tools to work with."

Even if the pests can be kept in

check, there is that matter of the painstaking pruning, which can start to feel as tricky, Morris joked, as expertly shaping a bonsai tree. Given all the care they require, he added, "You don't grow them by the acre. You grow them by the tree."

Still, Morris sounds optimistic that his organic growers will have a crop of their own to send to stores before too long. And customers will want to buy them when they do.

"They have an incredibly unique flavor profile," he said. "They're so sweet and aromatic."

"And their texture!" he added, beginning to sound a little star-struck himself. "Even peeling them and segmenting them is an experience."

It's no wonder, he added, "they've developed a cult following."

Camela Zarccone is a Seattle writer and cooking instructor.

More New Flavors

Citrus flavors go far beyond lemon and orange. This winter's options (with descriptions by PCC supplier Organically Grown Company) include:

- **African Shaddok:** The largest fruit in the citrus family, this thick-skinned pummelo (a relative to the grapefruit) has a meaty texture with a pleasant, subtly sweet grapefruit flavor.
- **Buddha hand:** This long-fingered citron is tremendously fragrant. It can perfume a room, and its floral zest can be used in any recipe that calls for citrus zest.
- **Calamondin:** This small, sour, bright-orange citrus is a cross between a loose-skinned mandarin and kumquats. Its peel and flesh are both edible. It is sweeter than a lemon, like a kumquat with a more assertive bouquet, and is delightful in marmalade, preserves and cocktails.
- **Lemonade lemon:** This round, juicy, super-sweet lemon, a hybrid with a Naval orange, can be eaten out of hand like an orange. The sweetness is due to lower acid, not higher sugar levels.
- **Lee nova mandarin:** The "sugar bomb" of the mandarin family.
- **Makrut lime:** A popular ingredient in Asian cuisine, particularly in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Its peel is rough, pebbled and filled with essential oils, and its fragrant zest is indispensable in culinary applications.
- **Mandarinquat:** This bite-size cross between a mandarin and a kumquat can be eaten whole—sweet peel, tart flesh and all.
- **Mango Valencia:** This mild, low-acid orange has a vanilla finish that tastes like a mango.



COOK WITH CITRUS

Interested in learning more ways to prepare citrus recipes, from salads to cakes? Try these PCC cooking classes:

Use citrus to spark up the menu with Mediterranean Winter Dinners with Zola Gregory. Visit pccmarkets.com/r/6301.

Camela Zarccone will teach a children's cooking class on Kitchen Chemistry: Citrus Science at pccmarkets.com/r/6302.



Fresh new ways to use fermented foods

By Rebekah Denn
Photos by Meryl Schenker

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says there are five major food groups. If Julie O'Brien were in charge she might add a sixth: probiotics.

For more than a decade, O'Brien and her team at Firefly Kitchens have produced award-winning sauerkrauts, kimchis, gingered "Yin Yang" carrots, even hot sauce and a "kimcheese" cream cheese spread. They've been honored with national Good Food Awards for "tasty, authentic and responsibly produced" foods. But O'Brien's dedication to the products—naturally fermented, certified organic, raw and vegan—is a passionate quest as much as a business.

"I'm trying to get people to think of kraut not as a condiment, but as an ingredient," she said recently at Firefly's Ballard production plant, surrounded by hundreds of pounds of organic cabbage and heaps of organic Honeycrisp apples.

"That's when you can have those positive impacts on your health, when you're eating it every single day."

Benefits of raw, naturally fermented foods are fairly well-accepted, especially with research focusing in recent years on how gut health affects the body. A 2021 study in the Journal Cell, in just one example, suggested fermented foods might improve the diversity of the microbiome and combat the bodily inflammation that is "pervasive in industrialized society."

In O'Brien's own diet, kimchi and kraut might top quiche or scrambled eggs or a bowl of savory congee. Forkfuls are mixed into her wraps and salads, scattered on grain bowls, blended into smoothies and dips and salad dressings. O'Brien—searching for every avenue to appeal to a wide audience—offers generally mild flavors at Firefly. There's the dill-and-kale flecked Emerald City Kraut, the bright lime and cilantro of Salsa Viva, the comforting caraway kraut that contains just four ingredients, with two of them being sea salts. (The other two, as you might guess, are green cabbage and caraway seeds.) In recent years, looking to add fresh fuel to the field, Firefly developed salts to sprinkle on foods, fermented brine tonics for sipping, even a new pureed kraut for those who don't like the texture or "squeak," as O'Brien describes it.

"Everyone wants convenience and ease...you can stir (pureed kraut) into baby food, you can stir it into your oatmeal, into



(Top) Troy Moore-Heart loads ingredients for seasonal Cranberry Kraut into a 55-gallon drum. (Bottom left) Maia Wohler cores and wedges cabbages in preparation for a fresh batch of the organic kraut. (Bottom right) sliced cranberries are ready to mix with cabbage, fresh oranges and Honeycrisp apples.



yogurt, into hummus, into guacamole, all your favorite things that you already have," O'Brien said.

Her passion stems from her intense belief in the benefits of "true" fermented foods, made without sugar or vinegar, which are credited with improving digestive health. Her interest turned into a vocation while pursuing a second-career degree as a nutritional therapist.

While O'Brien would, of course, like people to buy Firefly's products, she shared their key recipes in a 2014 cookbook, "Fresh & Fermented" and offers several recipes on Firefly's website. It's all the same to her if you make it at home, to her thinking, so long as you're eating it.

(T)hink of kraut not as a condiment, but as an ingredient

On one fall production day, Firefly's staff was starting their annual tradition of a limited edition Cranberry Kraut (it should be available at PCC through February). General Manager Debra Dubief said the team had been watching closely and waiting for the cranberry harvest to be ready.

Organic cranberries are already a rare crop in the Northwest, and they were unseasonably late last year, as were many other harvests given the cold, wet spring of 2022.

The seasonal kraut's four-week fermentation time meant processing them immediately so they'd be ready for Thanksgiving tables and then a few months longer in stores.

"It'll be ready exactly the day we want it picked up to go out to stores to get in people's hands," Dubief said.

A ton of cabbage—sometimes as much as 2,500 pounds—goes through the facility on typical production days.

On this one, Linda Harkness, a longtime worker who's known O'Brien since before the business began, washed and sorted rivers of scarlet berries, then sliced and cored her way through 32 pounds of apples. Honeycrisps command a premium price, but the variety's particular mix of sweetness and tart crunch make them the best variety for the recipe, O'Brien said. All Firefly's prod-

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Fresh new ways to use fermented foods

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ucts are certified organic; there was never a question about that, she said, with a focus on health and preserving natural microbes.

Another hefty Cambro container stored the peeled oranges Harkness had already processed, awaiting a blitz into the mixture along with pieces of zest. Another table was weighed down with cored and wedged cabbages, ready to be machine-cut into thinner ribbons along with the thin-sliced circlets of cranberry and half-moons of Honeycrisp.

Along with sea salt, spices and water, Troy Moore-Heart loaded them into a 55-gallon drum that rotated gently and tumbled everything together. As the timer sounded, the handful of workers on the line gathered around to watch the green and red-flecked river of produce cascade into a barrel. The fermented mixture would produce 300 jars, half the year's production. It's packaged by hand as well as processed that way, with workers using what looks like a modified silver milkshake container to measure equal portions into each jar before it's labeled, fermented, and ultimately shipped to stores or sold at farmers markets or packaged for mail orders.

"We're like farmers," O'Brien said. "Secondary farmers."

It's a lot of hands-on work in a 1,500 square-foot production facility. It's also something more than a manufacturing job.

Boxes that head to stores have cards inside thanking employees for their hard work stocking the shelves.

Harkness, who credits fermented foods with major health effects in her own family's life, blesses the jars before they leave the building. "I just think that good energy is really important and it shows up in the food. I have always had this belief that everything has its own form of consciousness..." she said.

"I always talk to the food and I tell them—the cabbages—thank you, and (thank you to) everybody that's touched it and when I pack up the pallets to go out or, I'm bringing some for somebody to take away I just put my hands on it and say thank you and bless you, with love and gratitude. Go out there and make everybody healthy, happy, prosperous and free, including us."

CURRY QUINOA SALAD

This is a lunchtime favorite at Firefly Kitchens. Quinoa, with its high protein content, along with all the flavorful ingredients, make this a delicious and nourishing staple. Add fresh mint or other seasonal herbs to tweak this salad's flavor. You may also toss in garbanzos, white beans, or sliced chicken or turkey to make a more substantial meal. This salad is a great one to make ahead because the flavors develop after resting in the refrigerator overnight, so it tastes even better the next day.

Makes 4 servings

- 1 tablespoon apple cider or rice wine vinegar
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped basil or Italian parsley
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- 1 ½ cups Yin Yang Carrots (jars available in PCC stores, or the recipe is available in the "Fresh & Fermented" cookbook)
- 1 ½ cups chopped red bell pepper (about 1 medium pepper)
- 4 cups cooked quinoa
- ½ cup chopped dried cranberries or cherries
- ½ cup chopped pistachios, almonds or cashews
- salt and pepper

Combine the vinegar, lemon juice, curry powder, olive oil, basil and cilantro in a medium-size bowl. Let sit 5 minutes.

Take the carrots out of the jar with a clean fork, letting any extra brine drain back into it. Toss the carrots with the bell pepper, quinoa, cranberries and nuts. Pour the carrot dressing over the quinoa and toss to coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve right away or refrigerate for up to 3 days.

—Recipe courtesy of Firefly Kitchens



Photo by C. Livingston

LEARN ABOUT FERMENTED FOODS

Firefly Kitchens co-founder Julie O'Brien will teach PCC cooking classes on how to make probiotics and fermented foods part of your daily diet, with out-of-the-box recipes from fruit smoothies to Firefly's popular Kimcheese dip. Sign up at pccmarkets.com/r/6303.

[SUSTAINABILITY REPORT]

From baguettes to breadcrumbs

PCC's private label "field to table" baguette is a standout artisan bread. It's made by Northwest landmark Macrina Bakery from organic wheat that's locally grown and milled, delivered fresh daily to all stores.

The problem: "By design, fresh bread displays in all grocery stores generally have leftovers at day's end and present a huge food waste and grocery rescue challenge," explained Rachel Tefft, PCC's senior manager, community food systems.

A partnership with Macrina, PCC and FareStart is trying to find fresh life for those loaves, inspired by PCC's participation in the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment, a public-private partnership of food businesses working toward a shared ambition of effective, industry-wide actions that prevent and reduce waste food along the West Coast.

The "upcycling" project is aimed at reducing food waste at PCC and keeping undesirable food out of food bank supplies—and also out of landfills, where food waste is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The project also supports new skills training and sales opportunities at FareStart, a long-established Seattle nonprofit providing industry job training and community food programs.

FareStart, essentially told PCC, "We've got cooks. We can figure this out. If you re-use the bread you have, what can we make?" said Tracy Marik, PCC's fresh director.



It's a complicated endeavor that involves a significant commitment from everyone involved.

Upcycling isn't unheard of within the co-op. Leftover roast chickens, for instance, can be stripped of meat to go into a number of deli items like chicken noodle soup. But developing a new product with outside agencies was a different level of project.

"If this were easy, it would have been done a long time ago. We've got some great partners and we're all willing to consider the possibilities," Marik said.

Most grocery stores wind up with around 15% of artisan breads left over at the end of the day. Ordering isn't an exact science. Sales vary enough that a sellout order on Tuesday might leave piles of leftovers on Wednesday; the goal is to have bread available when customers want it. "You have to have a very consistent offering for your customers, otherwise you will lose sales and disappoint people," Marik said.

To start the project, Macrina, which delivers bread daily to all 16 PCC stores, agreed to pick up leftovers so FareStart can

collect them. There's no extra work required for PCC store staff: Stale baguettes wind up in the back receiving area for all pickups, whether they're destined for donations or test kitchens or compost.

For upcycling, they determined the baguettes could be ground into breadcrumbs for recipes like PCC's turkey meatloaf, cut and baked into croutons, even sliced and toasted for crostini.

The potential benefits add up fast. PCC uses about 400 pounds of croutons per week alone in its salad bar and composed salads. It incorporates about 250 pounds of panko crumbs as well, which could be switched to baguette-breadcrumbs. If the project progresses, Marik could imagine adding other breads and bringing in stuffing mixes or other bread-based additions.

Croutons are the first test case.

FareStart developed a PCC recipe from day-old baguettes and Marik and his team tested the first version, suggesting a slightly smaller crouton size and a bit of paprika for a golden hue. With three garlic options, granulated garlic won out with taste testers over fresh garlic or garlic-infused oil, adding a hint of saltiness while maintaining a "fairly neutral" flavor profile that could work in a wide range of foods. (An added benefit: It's also less expensive than the other options. Anything that keeps the price competitive with other options improves the project's chances of success.)

The next step: A large-scale batch that store staff can test and see how it performs in deli foods. The earliest finished products should be available to pilot in PCC deli products by mid-2023.

The true test for it all, though, will be calculating financial models and making a marketable product. We'll look forward to updating the research and its edible results.

Q&A with Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center

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. *Sound Consumer* contributor Tara Austen Weaver talked with Sally Johnson, who was until recently the director of business development at Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center in Carnation, about 25 miles east of Seattle. The 240-acre organization, located on farmland and forest bordering the Snoqualmie River, is one of the agencies benefiting from sales of "Farm to School" bagged apples at PCC stores. Its produce can also be found at PCC.

Q: *How did Oxbow get started?*

A: Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center was founded as a nonprofit in 2009, by (investors and philanthropists) Tom and Judi Alberg, on land that had been a dairy farm in Tom's family. They really wanted to inspire people to eat healthy, sustainably grown food and to steward our natural resources for future generations. The goal was to foster a more engaged population—because more informed people make better choices.

Q: *How does Oxbow function today?*

A: We have a working organic farm while also having an onsite conservation team that does riparian and amphibian habitat restoration. We have a native plant nursery that is producing super high-quality plant starts. Then, in the farming, we can build that native plant pollinator strip. And we have an in-house education team that offers environmental science, STEM-based educational programs in the context of the farm as the classroom. So, there's a flywheel of interconnected offerings, but education is core to everything that we're doing.

Q: *It seems like you have four program areas. Can you tell me about the farming program?*

A: We are a working farm using sustainable farming practices and are certified Salmon-Safe, with 12 acres in cultivation. You can find our produce in PCC, at our farmstand, and through our CSA. We sell to restaurants as well, like Café Flora, Grand Central and London Plane. We also have hunger relief partners—Hopelink, FareStart and more. Almost every Friday during the season we have a group from FareStart out here gleaning. We also donate to the food bank in Carnation. In 2020 we donated 20,000 pounds of produce.

Q: *And how does your education program work?*

A: We have a one-acre farm that is the classroom—where we teach kids how things grow, how they decompose, what is in the soil, what is the life cycle of a plant, what are the parts of a plant. They also get to taste the vegetables—the kid who didn't even know that carrots came from the ground gets to pull one up and eat it. We offer programing for schools, but we also have family farm adventures—you can sign up and bring your kids. We also have one-week day camp programs in the summer that are pretty immersive and really fun. About 5,000 students come through Oxbow each year.

Q: *How does the native plant nursery function?*

A: We're dedicated to growing Washington native plant species and encouraging the widespread use of natives in local land-



Photos courtesy of Oxbow Farm



scapes. When the Burke Museum opened, Oxbow supplied 70,000 native plants for their outdoor garden space. We grow for individual gardens and also for conservation—and to help educate the public. Native plants are underappreciated as part of mitigating climate change and reducing water and soil usage. Also, they're beautiful and attract pollinators and many of them are edible. We sell plants through the farm stand and at Molbak's, where they've made a space for native plants, and other retailers. Starting next year, we're going to be offering more native plant gardening classes.

Q: *You have a conservation program as well?*

A: Our conservation program is really about ecological restoration and reviving forest ecosystems. We want to not only grow back our riparian forest and enhance our wetland habitats (Oxbow encompasses 240 acres, only 12 of which are farmed), but also contribute to the regional body of knowledge about the best ways to do that work. We monitor the ecological impacts of land use and restoration—looking at the best way to restore biodiversity and eliminating invasive species, we did a huge project removing knotweed around King County. We partner with community scientists and researchers at the University of Washington and Oregon State University, Woodland Park Zoo, Wash-

ington Department of Fish and Wildlife and more. Oxbow is the lab, but the knowledge and work is across the greater Puget Sound and especially across the Snoqualmie Valley. What we learn we use at Oxbow, but we don't want the knowledge to stay at Oxbow.

Q: *How did the pandemic impact your programs?*

A: We kept farming, but we pivoted and donated produce to food access programs. In 2021 we built an outdoor kitchen, which allows us to have great food when we have larger events. We opened the farm stand to do something fun together since the pandemic started, and this was the first time he had seen his son be silly and unconcerned. And the son said it was the first time he felt like he belonged somewhere in a really long time. There were fun events, but what was so much bigger was a family that was facing hardships could let down their barriers, be in nature and just be themselves. That's always important, but COVID really turned up the knob on the stressors of life.

Q: *How can people get involved and help the Oxbow mission?*

A: We have a membership program—it supports the mission work while also underwriting the cost of it. Becoming a member is the most direct way of supporting. And we have events—Pollinator Day is a really fun day. It's a celebration of all pollinators and you get to learn, participate in activities and eat really great food. We



have a resident chef and an outdoor kitchen and all the vegetables are fresh from the farm. And people dress up as their favorite pollinators. It's a wonderful celebration of this important link between natural systems and food production.

I remember at our Pollinator Day in 2021, I saw this father and son sitting out on a bench by the Oxbow Lake. Later I talked to the father and he said his son had been having a hard time—he struggled with online learning and was being bullied. This was the first time the family had left their apartment to do something fun together since the pandemic started, and this was the first time he had seen his son be silly and unconcerned. And the son said it was the first time he felt like he belonged somewhere in a really long time. There were fun events, but what was so much bigger was a family that was facing hardships could let down their barriers, be in nature and just be themselves. That's always important, but COVID really turned up the knob on the stressors of life.

Up against everything we're facing in the world, people need some hope—and they need a place to come to restore their spirit and have hope for the future.

For more information see oxbow.org

PCC Community Grants support gardens, harvests and education

Seed “libraries” to help people grow food at home, workshops on preserving food, and supplies for community farmers markets are among the 2022 PCC Community Grants.

The funds, totaling \$25,000, are meant to support PCC's mission to ensure that good food nourishes the communities we serve, while cultivating vibrant local, organic food systems. As a corollary, we strive to inspire and advance the health and well-being of people, their communities and the planet. The awards committee prioritized organizations run by, for and within historically marginalized communities.

So many organizations are providing services that matter at a time when donations are stretched tight. Knowing that the need is greater than the available funds, committee members tried to support grants addressing the root causes of hunger and societal problems rather than treating the symptoms. Recipients are:

City Fruit

Seattle is filled with gardens and fruit trees—but not everyone has access to backyard orchards, and not everyone who owns land has the time or ability to manage a large harvest.

City Fruit helps connect those gaps, with volunteers helping homeowners tend their trees, picking fruit, and sharing the crops with food banks and others in the community. Fruit is distributed within two miles of where it was originally harvested to food banks, elementary schools and community partners such as FareStart, the nonprofit said in its grant application. Options include not just common harvests like apples and pears, but also fruits that are typically much rarer for donated fruits, from quince and kiwis to persimmons. Additionally, "Fruit For All" farm stands throughout neighborhoods try to operate on weekends or weeknights for wider access, providing no-questions-asked free fruit.

City Fruit also works to reduce food waste; the organization has connected with community partners to process fruit that is bruised or otherwise unsuitable for food banks, resulting in applesauce and crabapple jelly and other edible solutions. A PCC grant will support City Fruit's harvest and distribution program.

EarthCorps

You've probably heard of P-Patch gardens. But a B-Patch?

That's the nickname for the Greenhouse Community Garden, the first P-Patch developed in the city of Burien. It's been a success in an area of King County that lacks equitable access to whole and fresh foods, according to the EarthCorps grant application, and it'll now be transformed into "a model and training facility" to expand community gardens throughout the city in South King County.

EarthCorps, the nonprofit grant applicant, has worked with the Burien community to plan and design the initiative, and build local support. EarthCorps will work on the garden transformation and on workshops with community groups to build new gardens around the city, developing other low-income neighborhoods with



limited food access into "community hubs with fresh and affordable food."

It's part of a new focus for EarthCorps, a 29-year-old nonprofit whose previous work includes projects like tree plantings and stream restorations. Organizers wrote in the grant application that "with the increasing knowledge of the racial inequities and injustices that exist throughout our country and our region, EarthCorps has pivoted (its) vision to center those who've historically been excluded—to build a better world where all people and nature thrive together."

It Takes A Village

At its annual Juneteenth celebration, It Takes A Village focuses on feeding the community in all sorts of ways—with literal food, but also with art, music, health care and job fairs.

With a PCC grant, the nonprofit plans to host pupus and workshops that will both distribute food from local BIPOC producers and teach attendees cooking skills for healthy lifestyles. Gardening, preserving and other routes to preparing "healthy affordable food" are its goal, along with providing meals to spark "creativity and freedom."

Pickling, canning, drying and freezing are all on the agenda, along with an education on foods produced in Washington and how to cook with them.

likely to thrive under current conditions."

The organization's Shareholders Farming Program lets farmers access 15 acres of land and a year-round 2,200-square-foot greenhouse to grow their food. Crops can then be sold at the farmers market, and a percentage is also distributed to local food banks. The crops include vegetables, fruits and herbs that can't be found in local grocery stores, including specialties like teff seeds and hibiscus flowers.

In 2022, partway through the growing season, the organization's storage unit was burglarized and the market supplies were stolen, "threatening to dismantle" all the hard work that has been done to date, according to the grant application. The PCC grant helped buy a storage shed and replenish the supplies for future years.

Solid Ground

In the chilly Northwest winters, there are only so many months when it's practical to grow food.

With the help of a PCC grant, Solid Ground hopes to extend that growing season on its plot at Marra Farm (see pccmarkets.com/r/6304), a historic site for agriculture. For more than 26 years the organization has tended a Giving Garden providing fresh produce to people and organizations in its South Park neighborhood, including Providence Regina Food Bank and the South Park Senior Center, as well as a recent "Food Farmacia" project benefiting patients at the Sea Mar South Park Health Clinic and other partnerships.

The nonprofit plans to install a greenhouse on its plot to extend its growing season, allowing it to plant starts earlier and protect seedlings from harsh weather. In addition to providing nutritious food, it's a way to bring the community together through education, cultural learning and belonging.

South King County Food Coalition

The 12 food banks that make up the South King County Food Coalition find many ways to provide fresh, local fruits and vegetables to a population "often priced out of supporting and influencing their local food economy." Serving more than 25,000 different families per year, the coalition's efforts include operating a farm on a former golf course and contracting with local farmers to buy fresh produce.

With a PCC grant, the coalition is planning seed lockers for each participating food bank that will contain seed libraries—enough seeds to support 50+ families who want to grow their own produce at home, along with gardening books and other resources. "The resource guide will be designed to encourage environmental stewardship at all scales, from apartment patios to a startup homestead farm," the application said.

Not all families will want to grow their own food, the organization acknowledged. But the opportunity for clients to "define their own food standards" is significant—to choose which plants they would like to grow, and to do so without risking money or resources that could otherwise have been used for groceries. The food banks operate in a region where many people don't live near a grocery store, and "families cope by substituting cheaper, processed foods" for fruits and vegetables. Providing free access to the resources needed to grow food at home, the application said, is "one method of acknowledging some of the systemic inequities impacting food security."

Hemp weaves a Joy-ful future for Black farmers

By Naomi Tomky, guest contributor

The Hollingsworth family broke new ground as the first Black-owned adult-use cannabis farm in Washington (and, possibly, in the country) when their Shelton farm opened almost a decade ago. But in support of their ambitious goals for equity in their industries, the Hollingsworths now look to a different crop recently legalized at the national level: hemp.

In 2020 the family converted a tiny segment of their 30,000-square-foot cannabis farm to hemp, which they use to make vegan candles with hemp fiber wicks and hempseed oil beauty products such as lotion, conditioner and soap. They recently began producing a private label lotion for PCC (see details below), produced by Joy Hollingsworth from hemp grown by brother Raft Hollingsworth III, based on recipes from salves they developed for family members.

“It won’t get you high,” Joy Hollingsworth laughs, answering the most commonly asked question about their products.

Various parts of the hemp plant are used around the world for food, made into building materials and woven into cloth. Hemp comes from the same Cannabis plant people use to get high, but, legally, from only cultivars with less than 0.3% THC—the cannabinoid with intoxicating effects—and with CBD as the dominant cannabinoid. Hempseed oil contains neither CBD nor THC, but does have natural anti-inflammatory, moisture-balancing and hypo-allergenic properties.

For the Hollingsworths, third-generation Seattle residents, it also holds life-changing potential.

Their entry into the cannabis industry in 2012 broke barriers from the start, fighting through the racist systems that destroy intergenerational wealth in Black families and deter Black farmers. Black people make up only 4% of people working in adult-use cannabis (also known as recreational cannabis). They are only 1.4% of all farmers in the U.S., according to the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture, and faced a long history of government discrimination (see pccmarkets.com/r/6306).

Blazing new paths is a family tradition. Dorothy Hollingsworth, Joy and Raft’s grandmother, was a groundbreaking civil rights activist and educator. She was the first Black woman to serve on a school board in Washington state and the first director of Seattle’s Head Start early education program, among other accomplishments.

The cannabis connection: Dorothy Hollingsworth, who passed away last summer at age 101, had started using cannabis in her 90s to stimulate her appetite. Joy and Raft’s mother had also used medical cannabis to ease pain after spinal surgeries stemming from scoliosis. So, when adult-use legalization passed in Washington in 2012, Raft proposed that his family take his small indoor growing experiments outside and



Photos by C Livingston

scale them into a legitimate operation. He convinced the family to invest their labor in the business, leaving their day jobs, and also their money—a necessity given the lack of banking options available to even legal cannabis businesses. They applied in the first round of licenses to grow adult-use cannabis in Washington in 2013 and opened the farm shortly thereafter.

As pioneers in a new industry, they found the same systemic bias that affects Black businesses around the country rearing its ugly head. Joy recalls going to dispensaries to sell their products and answering endless questions about every detail of their business and process. “Then another person walks in, that does not look like us, and those questions are not asked.” They struggled to find landlords willing to rent them space, eventually making decisions that compromise their comfort on a variety of levels, including safety. Joy, a former professional basketball player, makes sure to leave the hemp company before dark.

Beyond that, the shaky, state-specific legal status of adult-use cannabis prevented the cannabis company from capitalizing on the enthusiastic support it received as a Black-owned, barrier-breaking farm. “It’s so secretive,” explains Joy. “You can’t market it; you can’t have Instagram.”

Anthony Bourdain featured the Hollingsworths on his Seattle episode of Parts Unknown in 2018, introducing Joy and Raft to viewers across the country, along with “Auntie, Mom and Dad.” With bucolic music and images of the equally pastoral plants, the star extolled their hands-on farming and commitment to quality, how they took a slower, more personal approach than corporations trying to cash in on the crop. “But if they (cannot) go to a store to buy your product, they cannot support you,” Joy says. “It’s just really hard to capitalize off a market that’s so closed and constrained and highly, highly, regulated.” They also found new biases against the cannabis industry

as a whole, like the difficulty of getting crop insurance as a cannabis farm, partly due to its uneven legal status.

When the 2018 Farm Bill made hemp a legal crop throughout the nation, the expanded market created an opportunity. With the addition of the hemp company to their portfolio, the Hollingsworth family connected with allies in states with much larger Black populations—and where cannabis laws often lag behind those of Washington. In the Hollingsworth story, Texans, Georgians, and others see a future that includes a legal, equitable cannabis industry.

In their near-decade of farming, they watched the real-time effects of climate change in slow changes and a slew of extreme weather events including massive snowfall, inconsistent rain, and, once, a peculiar but ferocious combination of wildfires and hornets. With the hemp business, they saw an opportunity to align with multiple parts of their mission. “Hemp is going to be a really big anchor in creating this sustainability ecosystem where we can help restore our planet from all the deforestation.”

The Hollingsworth family hopes to use their accumulated knowledge and land to restore something more personal, too. “We have a responsibility, being at the forefront, to use our platform to bring awareness of the disproportionate impact that the war on drugs has had on people of color, particularly the Black community,” Joy explains. She sees legalization and President Joe Biden’s recent national pardon for possession convictions as starting points but hopes to see the country move beyond decriminalization and figure out how to reinvest in the decimated people and neighborhoods left behind by the incarceration of so many Black men. “I want people to think about, ‘OK, this is great, but how can we reinvest in these communities and continue to build them up?’”

One of her answers comes back to the farm, where she and her family break the mold of typical American farmers—white people with an average age of 57. “What we want to do is take our knowledge and our intellectual property, what we learned, and continue to get more farmers that look like us to actually grow food as well,” says Joy. As she and her family expand into hemp, they bring new products to shelves and connect with national audiences. They start to imagine how they can use their land and experience to create a more sustainable and equitable future—one filled with young, successful Black farmers supporting their communities.



Hollingsworth and PCC lotion

The Hollingsworth family’s thoughtful approach is why PCC has partnered with them to create new botanical body lotions, scented in lavender, sweet mint, pine and grapefruit + rosemary (plus an unscented lotion).

Raft Hollingsworth grows the hemp for their products without synthetic pesticides—only neem oil and ladybugs protect their crops. From there, the hemp heads to White Center, where Joy derives the hempseed oil and combines it with aloe and essential oils. Joy had initially reached out to Steven Jamieson, PCC’s health and body care merchandiser, about carrying Hollingsworth products and said it took a year and a half after that to formulate a lotion that met the co-op’s product standards. The long process, she said, “made me a better business owner and a better producer of quality products.” She shares the co-op’s priority on health and is cognizant of the risks of various chemicals in body care products—her own wife has serious fragrance allergies. As she phrased it, with typical bluntness, “We didn’t want to put any bullcrap out there.” She loves that PCC is local, connected with neighborhoods and “intentional”—just as they are, especially with their family name on every label.

The USDA must now revise its rules that allow for QR code-only labeling. The court dismissed claims made by PCC and other retailers that the rule infringed on their First Amendment rights to provide truth and transparency, but noted that the reason for the dismissal was because of USDA’s admission during the briefing stage that the law and rule were not intended to control retailer marketing and communications.

The fall ruling involved the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard (NBFDSD) that went into effect Jan. 1, 2022, governed by 2018 rules set by President Donald Trump’s administration.



Pink Moon Farm preserved

A 24-acre farm in Eatonville has been permanently protected from development. Pink Moon Farm, founded in 2016 by Grayson Crane, produces organic vegetables, eggs, Icelandic sheepskins and locally spun yarns, and grass-fed lamb.

It’s the 29th farm conserved by the Washington Farmland Trust, bringing the total amount of land protected by the non-profit to 3,036 acres. And it’s another small step supporting younger and independent small farmers in an era where the average farmer is age 57 and land prices out of reach.

Though Crane’s grandparents had farmed in Maine long ago, Crane initially fell into farming 12 or 13 years ago in Ontario, simply “looking for a job.”

But “I loved the work, I loved producing food, I liked the physicality of it, the intensity,” the 35-year-old said. A long-term career wasn’t what they expected, especially after moving to the University of Washington to earn a master’s degree in geography. Yet they realized in the end, “if I could make it work, I really loved farming.”

Pink Moon came after years working through the nonprofit Viva Farms incubator and four years at Mother Earth Farm in the Puyallup Valley. Buying the farm in 2016 “felt like a big, big stretch then for me, financially and personally.” Even that stretch was possible because Crane was employed by a nonprofit at the time, not self-employed, which would have been a significant barrier for bank loans. They’ve been thinking a lot in turn about how many generations lived on the land who did not have even their level of opportunity. “Indigenous folks who lived here much longer than me who again, don’t have the same access to legal ownership,” they said. Pink Moon is on historic Nisqually land, and its website says it’s “privileged to continue stewarding and working with this place.”

With years of working in vegetable production, Crane felt comfortable with “the cash flow, the production, all the ins and outs” with that aspect of farming. But they also hoped to bring in animals to see “if we could operate the farm as more of a closed loop. Obviously that’s not totally possible, we live in a very interconnected world—but maybe we could integrate those things better together, limit our off-farm inputs” and the accompanying bills and reliance on industry.



Photo credit Kae-Lin Wang

Enter Icelandic sheep.

Beyond the meat and wool, the grazing herbivores are useful living mowers and blackberry clearers in more riparian areas of the land. “We don’t have to buy any off-farm compost, which is awesome,” Crane said.

The daily work of the farm is deeply satisfying, the financial juggles less so. It’s involved “all these chess moves” to scale the business plan and finance improvements and figure out “How do I make a living wage and pay the people working for me well,” mostly crammed into the four-month off-season.

For instance, farmers have to front the money for many county or federal cost-sharing programs and then get reimbursed after the fact, Crane said. “That was just totally out of my financial ballpark. We’re talking about field fencing, that’s upwards of \$40,000...Unfortunately in the system we’re in, it takes money to make money.”

The trust’s conservation allows them to “think and make better informed decisions, not just about our life but the future of this land and this farm business.”

Improvements they can plan for now include major steps like infrastructure for winter vegetables, which will allow the farm to employ year-round workers.

They recently completed the new fencing, “things that are just life-changing in terms of stress...We had like five strands of barbed wire around the property (before). Sheep, dogs, anything will blow through that with a smile on its face. Having a good fence, I don’t even know what new things I’ll be able to think about and do now that I’m not worried about that.”

Farming to Crane is “care work,” the trust said in a press release, and they are grateful to the Nisqually tribe for efforts to preserve and steward the region. The farmland was protected in part through the Pierce Conservation District, the Washington State Conservation Commission, and the Pierce County Conservation Futures Program.

The nonprofit trust was founded in 1999 as the PCC Farmland Trust.

To order products from Pink Moon Farm or to learn more, see PinkMoonFarm.org. It offers a CSA and is also at the Capitol Hill Farmers Market in season.

[POLICY REPORT]

Court actions on GMO food labeling

PCC, Center for Food Safety (CFS) and other plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit made some significant strides toward better genetically engineered (GE) food transparency when a U.S. District Court ruled in September that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was wrong to allow QR codes alone as a sufficient disclosure method for GE ingredients.

The USDA must now revise its rules that allow for QR code-only labeling. The court dismissed claims made by PCC and other retailers that the rule infringed on their First Amendment rights to provide truth and transparency, but noted that the reason for the dismissal was because of USDA’s admission during the briefing stage that the law and rule were not intended to control retailer marketing and communications.

The fall ruling involved the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard (NBFDSD) that went into effect Jan. 1, 2022, governed by 2018 rules set by President Donald Trump’s administration.

“This is a victory for all Americans,” said Meredith Stevenson, staff attorney for the CFS, in a press release. CFS filed the case against USDA in 2020 on behalf of a coalition of nonprofits and retailers, including Natural Grocers, which operates 157 stores in 20 states, and PCC.

“PCC believes our communities have a right to know what is in their food and how their food is grown in a way that is clear, easy to access for all, and doesn’t violate the First Amendment rights of retailers,” said Aimee Simpson, PCC’s director of advocacy and product sustainability.

While these wins were significant, there were also disappointing findings from the District Court, particularly the determination that the NBFDSD Act did not require labeling for highly processed GE ingredients.

“The NBFDSD rule basically carves out an exception for any GE ingredient that is processed enough to be ‘undetectable.’ But chopping up something into undetectable

pieces doesn’t erase how that ingredient was grown and the harm that GE farming and systems imposed on the planet and people,” explains Simpson. “We think consumers want to know how their food was grown, not just what is in it, and that was the intention of the NBFDSD Act.”

CFS filed a notice of appeal concerning this ruling and others in November, which PCC and other original plaintiffs joined.

The co-op has a long history of fighting for tougher labeling requirements, including its support for a failed 2013 state initiative that would have required labels on packaged foods containing GE ingredients.

With the national standard, PCC has voiced disappointment in the rule since its release in 2018, which forced it to roll back its own plans for a GE labeling program. The CFS lawsuit had followed a long campaign led by CFS for GE labeling in the U.S.

For ongoing updates on the lawsuit see pccmarkets.com/r/6305.

PCC CUSTOMER SERVICE STARS



JAMIL BATES

Deli Helper Clerk, Edmonds PCC

Jamil started work in the Edmonds PCC kitchen three years ago. He has supported his team in the dishwashing position and now works the counter station, taqueria, or grab and go. With the help of his coworkers, Jamil is proud that his work in the PCC Kitchen has improved his confidence in helping customers and excelling in a dynamic environment. He enjoys many dishes that PCC produces but says Mac Salad and Crispy Tofu is his go-to lunch combination. When not at work, Jamil is a full-time student who loves exploring trails, beaches and parks with his pug, Charlie. Jamil also is passionate about immigrant and refugee rights, with a desire for expanded resources in this area. From Jamil’s point of view, customer service is all about patience, understanding, and remembering what it’s like to be a customer. It’s these qualities and more that make him such a wonderful addition to our Edmonds deli. Thank you, Jamil, for your consistent and kind service!



ROBERT JONES

Courtesy Clerk, Downtown PCC

Robert is a vital part of our Downtown team. He started work with PCC at the Columbia City store almost four years ago with the goal of meeting new people and staying active in the community. On each Courtesy Clerk shift, he steps into the store with fresh eyes and prioritizes the tasks that will best improve the customer’s experience. He simultaneously remains present in the moment by greeting, helping, and listening to as many customers as he can. Robert appreciates the values behind our products and calls out the Ocean’s Balance Dulse as being a hidden gem. He loves to add it to salads and smoothies, or simple meals like quinoa, vegetables and salmon. In his free time, Robert practices yoga and mindfulness, and he loves to listen to philosophical or meditation tapes. Robert’s dedication to the present moment and love of human connection makes him such a valuable member of our Downtown team. Robert, thank you for offering your skills and experience to our customers every day!

Vegetable representation matters

By Angela Garbes, guest contributor

One of my favorite foods was—and still is—sinigang, a soup traditionally rendered sour with tamarind or kalamansi. We ate it often when I was growing up; for convenience my parents always used Knorr seasoning packets to flavor the water they boiled pork neck bones in, packets that originated from my grandparent’s supermarket in Pampanga, dozens of them layered into the suitcases that accompanied them on their return flights to the United States.

The vegetables my mom and dad added to my childhood sinigang reflected what was available to them in small-town Pennsylvania in the 1980s: tiny round red radishes dropped into the pot whole; scraggly, brown-tipped bunches of watercress; boxes of frozen Birds Eye pre-cut okra, vivid green slices suspended in icy blocks like glacial fossils. I remember the frozen rectangles dropped unceremoniously into the pot just before serving, the white okra seeds (firm, like tiny eyeballs) and slime commingling with the simmering broth, making it viscous. My parents ladled the sinigang into a bowl of rice for me, and I’d immediately douse it with juice from the plastic yellow ReaLemon bottle shaped like the fruit, and fish sauce to make it saltier and bracingly sour.

For most of my adult life—I’d say up until about 10 years ago—I didn’t cook much Filipino food. I did a lot of cooking, though. I roasted chickens, learned to make chilaquiles, iceberg wedge salads with homemade blue cheese dressing, radicchio risotto, posole. I made all kinds of soups: lentil, potato leek, farro, kale and sausage ribollita, avgolemono, gazpacho. But I didn’t dare attempt longtime favorites such as sinigang, tinola, tom kha or pho. I became a confident cook in my 20s, except where Filipino and Southeast Asian dishes close to my heart were concerned. To be fair I did make pancit and congee regularly, but only on specific occasions: pancit for friends’ birthdays, congee when my spouse or I was sick.

I told myself I didn’t need to learn to make pho or tom kha—after all, you can get excellent versions of these soups all over Seattle, pretty cheaply at that. I told other people I didn’t need to learn to make sinigang or bulalo—after all, I could get the best versions, made by my mother and father, at their house, just 20 minutes away. All of these things are true, of course, but they also hide the truth, which I am still figuring out, which goes something like: these dishes are so important to me that I didn’t dare learn how to make them for fear that I would mess them up; that the world of food is so vast and inspiring and I’m fortunate to be able to turn away from cuisines close to me and learn from other places; that, for years, on some level I bought into the idea that my



“humble, ethnic” food—“cheap eats” served at “holes in the wall” in “off the beaten track” neighborhoods—was less important than French or Italian cuisine and I understood what I should really be paying attention to, especially if I wanted to write professionally about food (which I did).

I make Filipino food often now. My sinigang is soured with the kalamansi juice that I get from the heavy box of kalamansi that my Tita Baby sends from her tree in West Covina, and which we painstakingly squeeze and drain and freeze. Pancit, kalbi, pad thai, congee and bibimbap are in regular family meal rotation. The shift was deliberate, though I can’t point to one clear reason why. It goes something like: I got pregnant and started thinking about what foods I would pass down to my child the way my parents did to me, every year I feel myself and my parents getting older and I want to make good use of our time together, I’ve done a lot of work to value myself and my Asian-ness and Filipinx culture properly and I get more curious about all of this with each passing day. I made friends with people who love to cook and our group chat is almost entirely dedicated to planning our next elaborate meal (and we now have a tradition—five years strong? the pandemic has scrambled time—of hosting these families on Christmas Eve and cooking a Noche Buena feast that always begins with fresh-fried lumpia), I moved to a neighborhood with a Filipino market down the street that stocks at least 12 kinds of greens—yu choy, gai lan, kang kong, camote, malunggay—and fresh okra.

And, most recently, I joined the CSA program of Kamayan Farm, a Filipinx-owned flower and vegetable farm that is part of Second Generation Seeds, which Kamayan owner Ari de Leña describes as “a collective of Asian American growers, inviting our community to reclaim the narrative around Asian crops and their foodways.” This is our first season with Kamayan and with every new batch of vegetables I pick up, I have found myself increasingly astounded and emotional.

(We belonged to another CSA, Local Roots, for over 10 years. It was great. I consider the owners, Siri and Jason, friends and for a couple of wonderful seasons I did a work-share CSA, spending one day a week on the farm with them and their crew pick-

ing vegetables, weeding and packing boxes in exchange for vegetables. Like everyone, different farmers have different interests, and at Local Roots, their passion is for Italian vegetables, especially chicory and radicchio. We decided to switch to Kamayan because for the last few years, especially during the pandemic when so many local small businesses closed, we’ve thought longer and harder about which small businesses we want to support. I’ve decided I want, as much as possible, to give direct financial support to my Filipinx peers.)

Over the last two months, we’ve received Chinese celery (thinner, leafier, far less watery than the celery you typically encounter), yukina savoy, snow peas and perilla leaves. And with these vegetables I’ve made the best, sauciest stir-fries of my life (thanks to this recipe shared in the Kamayan newsletter—“velveting” beef has changed my life!) and a bibimbap feast that made both my daughters stand up on their chairs and cheer.

It’s true that I am an easy cry and it’s not entirely unusual for food to bring me to tears, but what really gets me about our CSA is the same feeling I had when my publisher hired Janelle (Quibuyen) to design the cover of my book, when Jia (Tolentino of The New Yorker) reviewed my book, when I got to do tour events with Genevieve Villamora, Mel Miranda, Ligaya Mishan and Jenny Odell. To collaborate and be in conversation with six other Pinay women is a dream that, until recently, I didn’t even know I was allowed to have.

And now, week after week, I get to savor Ari and her crew’s care and legacy work. It means more to me than I am able to describe right now to pick up vegetables with my daughters and talk about what “kamayan” means, the irreplaceable experience and value of doing things with your hands. To practice our Tagalog. To bring home Asian vegetables grown nearby that stir up deep feelings and memories for me and open up new worlds for them.

Seattle resident Angela Garbes is author, most recently, of “Essential Labor” (Harper Wave, \$25.99), named a Best Book of 2022 by The New Yorker. This essay was originally published as a newsletter (angela garbes.substack.com) and is reprinted by permission.

Farming from family heritage

Winter may seem too early to think about produce from local farms, but signups for many CSA programs begin in January. A growing number of farms in the region are offering CSAs connected to the farmer’s family heritage or life experience. They include:

BUMBLEBEE FARM
Woodinville, WA
bumblebee-farm.com

At Bumblebee Farm, Amy White and Katy Bond focus on heirloom vegetables—many of them from the Slow Food Ark of Taste. With Bond’s Chinese ancestry and White’s love of unusual produce, their interests run the gamut. Offerings include Asian favorites such as bok choy, tatsoi, napa cabbage, gai lan, shiso and pea vines, as well as European specialties like broccolo fiolano, puntarelle, Breton shelling beans, Basque peppers and various chicories.

KAMAYAN FARM
Carnation, WA
kamayanfarm.com

In the Snoqualmie Valley, Ariana de Leña is honoring her Filipino heritage at Kamayan Farm (kamayan means “with hands” in Tagalog). Her produce includes perilla, gai lan, bitter-melon, upo/opo (bottle gourd), yukina savoy, mustard greens, Chinese celery, napa cabbage and Tokyo bekana. The farm is a member of Second Generation Seeds, a collective dedicated to preserving and evolving heritage crops and foodways of the Asian diaspora.

LOCAL ROOTS
Duvall, WA
localrootsfarm.com

Italian vegetables are a passion at Local Roots Farm, specifically radicchio and chicories. Husband and wife owners Siri Erickson and Jason Salvo developed an affection for these bitter greens—which are often magenta or pink—while spending time in Italy, and have been promoting them ever since. You can find their puntarelle, variegato di castelfranco, rosso di chioggia, and more through their CSA program and at their farm store at 26331 Valley Street, Duvall, WA.

TUK MUK FARM
Woodinville, WA
tukmukfarm.com

Tuk Muk Farm specializes in hard-to-find Asian vegetables, such as shiso, mizuna, daikon radish, burdock, Japanese cucumbers, komatsuna, Thai eggplant, pea shoots and edible chrysanthemum greens (shungiku). Farmer Shawn Miller sells at the Madrona Farmers Market and restaurants as well as the CSA.

Compiled by Sound Consumer contributor Tara Austen Weaver

Brighten meals by cooking with fresh herbs

By Nancy Leson, guest contributor

Long before the era of email and Evites, my grandfather owned a printing shop that specialized in custom letterhead and engraved invitations. As a child, I’d often practice the alphabet with letterpress type there and make paper chains from paper scraps.

When I’d had enough of the deafening chug-a-chug-a-chug of the big black presses, I’d hightail it to the tangle of greenery that defined the backyard.

There, mint grew in wild profusion, its scent as alluring to me then as it is now.

I was six when my grandfather died. The shop was soon sold, but I’m reminded of it—and him—each time I snip a handful of fresh mint for a Middle Eastern salad, or a sprig for a mug of hot tea.

You don’t need an engraved invitation to appreciate the joys of fresh mint, or any of the wide world of culinary herbs that grow here in the Pacific Northwest. Instead, I invite you to consider using fresh herbs to up the ante in most everything you cook.

I generally have the brownest thumb in three counties, yet a knack for growing herbs. And by “knack” I mean plant and ignore!

That’s what I’ve done with the chives near my backdoor, dormant in the heart of winter, but a returning godsend each spring as their delicate green shoots provide an oniony addition to an omelet or a stir-fry, while their lavender-hued blossoms act as glamorous garnish, adding a pretty “bite” to my chilled cucumber soup.

Consider using fresh herbs to up the ante in most everything you cook

My gnarly sage plant grows year-round, its hardy leaves lending their scent to a pan of browned butter—a simple sauce for homemade potato gnocchi, or store-bought PCC butternut squash ravioli.

It was hard to ignore the rosemary that grew in our yard for more than 20 years until it died a natural death several winters back after a particularly harsh cold spell. Prolific and unruly, its sturdy sprigs morphed into a magic wand when used during barbecue season to brush olive oil onto grilled lamb. Evergreen—until it wasn’t—it’s where I’d head year-round, scissors in hand, to make my rosemary and sea salt dinner rolls. (It’s since been replaced, and hopefully will thrive for many more winters to come.)

Rosemary stars in the lemony cornmeal-rosemary cake from Tom Douglas’ cookbook, “Tom’s Big Dinners,” in which, in which the needle-like leaves act as both flavor enhancer (when chopped fine) and garnish (blanched, whole), their mildly medicinal mien balanced by a sweetened mascarpone glaze and a hefty hit of lemon juice and zest.

In fall and winter, I use fresh bay leaves in my braises and Bolognese, but who knew how much I’d come to love bay steeped in simmered milk and cream as the basis for a sweet yet savory homemade ice cream?

I regularly turn to “The Herbfarm Cookbook” and follow chef-author Jerry Traunfeld’s master recipe to create various herb-infused ice creams (he’s fond of cinnamon basil).



Photos by Nancy Leson

What goes around came around recently when a friend showed up at my door with a posy of fresh Turkish bay. “It’s from the original Herbfarm,” she explained, name-dropping the famous farm-turned-restaurant, late of Fall City and long-lived in Woodinville’s wine country. Turns out she keeps a well-pruned bay plant in a container on her condo balcony in Edmonds, while her Herbfarm original looms large at her second home in Quilcene.

The next time she showed up it was with a small potted bay, a dividend from the original. That precious gift took root in my garden, providing me with bay leaves fresh and dried (on a paper towel, in my microwave), as well as a literal connection to the restaurant I’ve reviewed as a critic—and delighted in as a diner—for nearly three decades.

I’ve also found great delight seated, a glass of rosé in hand, at the lengthy counter at chef Renee Erickson’s Seattle restaurant

The Whale Wins, where I once watched a prep cook spend the entirety of my meal stripping fresh herbs for the house’s mainstay salad, described on the menu as: “Lettuces, herbs, pistachio, parmesan.” I’ve recreated this at home ever since.

Simple yet spectacular, it’s built with soft lettuces (I prefer bibb or oak leaf) and an abundance of tender herbs. I reach for fronds of dill, cilantro and French tarragon, but to each his or her own (favorites). I toss these with vinaigrette, then finish with a flurry of finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and—subbing for the pistachios—crushed Marcona almonds.

The summer season is short, the colder months far longer. Which is why I’m a big fan of fresh supermarket herbs. Especially those sold in small planter-pots or with root ball attached as “living herbs,” which I transport to repurposed cans that once held Italian tomatoes. These spark joy when perched, indoors, on the windowsill over my kitchen sink, where they’re easy to water and access.

Whatever the season, I use an abundance of store-bought Italian parsley and cilantro—tender stems included!—in everything from soups, stews and sautés to sauces, salads and salsas. Once home with these stalwarts in hand, I remove the twist-ties or rubber bands and, to ensure they’ll last longer, immediately wash them, spin-dry, wrap in paper towels (or cotton tea towels) and place them in zip-top bags.

Whenever you find yourself with a bonanza of fresh herbs, try this trick: clean then finely chop the herbs; place a couple-few tablespoons in each section of an ice cube tray; (barely) cover with olive oil and freeze. Pop them out and store in a freezer-bag. Instant flavor!

Now excuse me while I head out to my garden, where even in the depths of winter oregano hides among the hedgerow, growing wild like the mint of my childhood having seeded itself and propagated long ago. As for mint? I keep that in a cedar container protected from the elements, where I stop to rub fragrant leaves between my fingers and remember.

Nancy Leson is an award-winning food writer and radio personality who learned much of what she knows about food during her first career: waiting tables. Find her PCC cooking classes at pccmarkets.com/r/6308.

When “healthy eating” is not what it seems

By Erin Cazel, guest contributor

The New Year often brings renewed and vigorous commitment to healthful eating. Most people unflinchingly commend such dedication.

There’s increasing recognition, though, that healthy can become unhealthy at certain extremes. With eating, this interest in nutritious diets can slide into a preoccupation with the quality and purity of foods at the expense of mental, emotional, social and even physical health.

It may start with an understandable desire to consume primarily organic produce, or a need to avoid an ingredient that triggers a food sensitivity. Perhaps it begins with reading nutrition labels to reduce exposure to chemical additives. But for some, passionate pursuit of health devolves into rigid adherence to food restrictions that categorizes foods as good or bad, clean or unclear. As this pattern continues, planning for and preparing foods consumes an inordinate amount of time and energy.

People experiencing this may develop significant anxiety around eating where food sources or preparation methods are unknown, such as restaurants or at the home of a loved one. They can become isolated as the drive to eat right crowds out other interests. Food becomes targeted solely toward nutrition, while joy and pleasure in eating withers away.

Understanding orthorexia

If this sounds to you like a description of an eating disorder, you’re in good company. Orthorexia is the clinical term that describes this disordered eating pattern, lending necessary gravity to what may otherwise appear innocuous, or even laudable at first. The term was first coined in 1997. It is not yet incorporated as an official diagnosis in the DSM-V, the handbook used by medical professionals that classifies mental disorders, but it is becoming more commonly studied in peer-reviewed medical journals and understood as a distinct phenomenon. Orthorexia is similar to the more well-known eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia, in that individuals severely restrict food intake. In orthorexia, however, food restriction is based on the perceived quality of food, not the quantity.



Recognizing orthorexia can be complicated. In the beginning stages of orthorexia, it may seem as though an individual’s health is improving. They may receive accolades for changes in lifestyle and discipline that reinforce their food choices and eating patterns. So where do you draw the line between healthy passion and detrimental fixation?

Without specialized training, it is sometimes difficult even for health care providers to correctly assess eating disorder symptoms. In a 2006 study, 91 clinicians were asked to read a passage describing the disturbed eating patterns of a fictional character named Mary. They were then asked whether they thought Mary had a problem and to rate her anxiety, depression and eating disorder symptoms. Less than half of the clinicians in the study correctly identified that Mary had an eating disorder. What’s even more alarming is that the rate of diagnosis dropped drastically (from 44% to 17%) if Mary was portrayed as Black instead of white, even though all other details were kept constant.

Beyond the stereotype

This study highlights the dangerous trend of underdiagnosis of eating disorders among people of color and in other historically marginalized groups. This is due, in part, to the historical association of eating disorders with affluent, young, cis-gender, white females. This stereotype stands strong today (do a Google image search for “anorexia”), even though research consistently shows that anorexia occurs at similar rates among all demographic groups and genders, and that bulimia and binge eating disorders occur at higher rates among ethnic minorities.

Furthermore, the impact of eating disorders is generally greater for people in traditionally marginalized groups. BPOC and LGBTQ+ people,

males and people in larger bodies are less likely to be diagnosed or even asked about their eating disorder symptoms by a doctor than cis-gender white females. The presentation of eating disorder symptoms and patterns of seeking help among these groups may differ, further delaying diagnosis. This means disordered eating patterns become more deeply rooted and continue for a longer time, leading to worse health outcomes and decreasing the likelihood of long-term recovery without lifetime health consequences.

Marginalization itself magnifies the impact of eating disorders

Even when individuals who do not fit the stereotypical profile are diagnosed, treatment may not be accessible or even desirable. Programs built around the white female experience may not be culturally sensitive or relevant to others. Those who are not comfortable confiding in a white therapist may struggle to find a non-white therapist who treats eating disorders. Because eating disorders are often still perceived as a disorder of vanity among a well-resourced demographic, there is little funding for research compared with similar illnesses, treatment options are expensive, and often treatment is not covered within public health insurance plans. These factors compound the barriers for accessing help and healing among marginalized groups.

Marginalization itself magnifies the impact of eating disorders. Marginalization is the experience of being pushed out, excluded, and told you’re worth less than others. For those in minority communities, marginalization happens repeatedly in big and small ways, and can lead to deeply internalized shame and self-loathing. Messages such as “I don’t deserve to take up

space” and “I’m not worthy” can take root, reinforced by daily experiences of racism and stigmatization. This puts people from minority communities at higher risk for the development of eating disorders, because eating disorders are not simply patterns of disordered eating, but are disorders of anxiety, disconnection and shame. An eating disorder is not about wanting to look better, but about wanting to be better.

Orthorexia challenges our preconceptions of disordered eating and even our perception of health. Discussion around orthorexia can provoke us to reshape our understanding of eating disorders and propel movement toward more equitable health practices. Every person, across all communities, is worthy of care—rooted in belonging—that nourishes mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Erin Cazel is pursuing a Master’s in Nutrition at Bastyr University. Radical hospitality is Erin’s life passion—she loves gathering community around a table filled with food and conversation, and cares deeply about using foods to nurture the body, heart and mind.

A pioneer in natural medicine, Bastyr University is a nonprofit, private university that is at the forefront of developing leaders in natural health arts and sciences for the 21st century. Bastyr offers graduate and undergraduate degrees in science-based natural medicine that integrates mind, body, spirit and nature. The University is also a leader in conducting cutting-edge research in complementary and alternative medicine and in offering affordable natural health care services in its local communities.

For more information and resources about eating disorders, including a screening tool and helpline, visit the National Eating Disorders Association at pecmarkets.com/r/6310



[NEWS BITES]

Salish Sea reefnets

Only 12 commercial fishing captains still hold permits to go reefnet fishing in the Pacific Northwest out of a fleet that once numbered in the hundreds. The distinctive fishing technique dates back thousands of years as an Indigenous method to catch salmon. Its practitioners today say the gear should proliferate as the preferred way to harvest healthy salmon runs while avoiding fragile stocks. (*KNKX.org*)

Cascadian Farm land donated

General Mills announced it is donating the Cascadian Farm Home Farm in Skagit Valley, Washington to new owners, Rodale Institute. The Home Farm is a working organic farm started in 1972 by Cascadian Farm founder, Gene Kahn, who believed that organic agriculture could make a positive impact on the health of the planet. “We are excited to bring Rodale Institute’s renown research, education and consulting capabilities to the Pacific Northwest via the Home Farm and create a lighthouse in the region for all farmers, producers and consumers. We look forward to welcoming people to the Rodale Institute Northwest Organic Center at Cascadian Farm in the near future,” said Jeff Tkach, chief impact officer at Rodale Institute. (*CascadianFarm.com*)

Climate amendment approved

With broad bipartisan support, the Senate ratified by a 69-27 vote a global treaty that would sharply limit the emissions of super-pollutants that frequently leak from air conditioners and other types of refrigeration. The treaty—known as the Kigali Amendment to the 1987 Montreal Protocol—compels countries to phase out the use of the potent hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, which are hundreds to thousands of times as powerful as carbon dioxide in speeding up climate change. The United States became the 137th country to ratify the amendment—and negotiators said the move would encourage the remaining nations to follow suit. (*WashingtonPost.com*)

Climate-Smart Wood

A proposal led by Sustainable Northwest and partners was awarded a more than \$25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for a project titled “Building the Climate-Smart Wood Economy.” The grant, Partnership for Climate Smart Commodities, will bring together tribal, small family forest and nonprofit wood producers with data scientists and the design and construction industry to manage and restore tens of thousands of acres with an initial focus in Oregon, Washington and northern California. The project will quantify the positive impacts of climate-smart management on carbon sequestration,

wildfire intensity, and cultural values, and will also develop new resources for leaders in the architecture, engineering, and construction communities to understand the importance of climate-smart forestry and to find sources of climate-smart wood through pre-design, design, and construction phases of development. (*Ecotrust.org*)

Tart cherry industry

Imported tart cherry products have flooded the domestic market in the past decade, upending the U.S. industry’s competitive balance and leaving it with few options to stem the tide. The Michigan Cherry Committee, funded by an \$89,000 federal grant, is studying the feasibility of using a geographical indication (GI) to brand domestically produced Montmorency tart cherry products. If approved by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, a GI label will help differentiate U.S. Montmorency products from international competition, said Julie Gordon, MCC’s executive director and president of the Cherry Marketing Institute. (*GoodFruit.com*)

Sustainable flour

King Arthur believes it can fully revamp its supply chain over the next eight years, but it knows the arduous task of doing so will require collaboration, both with farmers and other industry leaders. The flour company released a set of sustainability goals it aims to hit by 2030, which it believes will lessen the overall carbon footprint of its wheat operations. Specifically, King Arthur is targeting the emissions generated in its supply chain—100% of the flour in its bags will be milled from regeneratively grown wheat, and its facilities will use 100% renewable electricity. (*FoodDive.com*)

Sagebrush loss

Every year, the West loses 1.3 million acres of its iconic sagebrush steppe, according to the newest report from a multi-agency group working to conserve this important ecosystem. That’s roughly 2,000 square miles—an area about the size of Grand Canyon National Park, or four times the sprawl of Los Angeles. The largest terrestrial biome in the Lower 48, sagebrush rangeland spans 13 states and once covered a third of the continental U.S. (*hcn.org*)

Paraquat dangers

For decades, the Swiss chemical giant Syngenta has manufactured and marketed a widely used weedkilling chemical called paraquat, and for much of that time the company has been dealing with external concerns that long-term exposure to the chemical may be a cause of the incurable brain ailment known as Parkinson’s disease. Syngenta has repeatedly told customers and

regulators that scientific research does not prove a connection between its weedkiller and the disease, insisting that the chemical does not readily cross the blood-brain barrier and does not affect brain cells in ways that cause Parkinson’s. But a cache of internal corporate documents dating back to the 1950s reviewed by the Guardian suggests that the public narrative put forward by Syngenta and the corporate entities that preceded it have at times contradicted the company’s own research and knowledge. (*TheGuardian.com*)

Seaweed farms

There’s a rising tide of interest in opening seaweed farms in the Pacific Northwest. If even half of the current applicants succeed, it would more than double the small number of commercial seaweed growing operations in Oregon and Washington state. According to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, there are now five prospective seaweed farmers with pending aquatic lease applications before the agency and another four more in the wings, for a total of nine in various stages of permitting. (*KUOW.org*)

Solar power grants

King County’s commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions includes investments in clean, renewable solar energy—and new grants from the Washington State Department of Commerce will fuel a sustained expansion of the county’s solar power generation capacity. Totaling nearly \$135,000, the recently announced grant funding will result in 200 kilowatts of total solar power generation capacity at the Solid Waste Division’s Shoreline and Bow Lake recycling and transfer stations. This announcement follows action earlier this year by the Solid Waste Division to install a new solar panel array at the Vashon Recycling and Transfer station that will generate about 172,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year—enough to meet the annual needs of the transfer station, or about two dozen single-family homes. (*KingCountyGreen.com*)

Upcycling peanut skins

Ondulla Toomer, a research chemist with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) at the agency’s Food Science and Market Quality and Handling Research Unit, is studying a range of food and livestock feed uses that could potentially open the door to new, value-added markets for peanut skins. Instead of landfill waste, Toomer sees untapped nutritional potential in the paper-thin skins, which are chock full of protein, carbohydrates, fats, fiber and minerals and vitamins. Peanut skins also contain bioactive compounds, including antioxidants that help neutralize cell-damaging molecules in the body called free radicals. (*ars.usda.gov*)

Factory farm lawsuit

Dozens of advocacy groups have filed a lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), claiming the federal department has failed to come up with a plan to regulate water pollution from factory farms. The suit claims the agency has yet to respond to a 2017 legal petition from more than 30 environmental groups demanding that the EPA tighten its Clean Water Act enforcement for factory farms, also known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), where thousands of animals are sometimes confined. The agency has never explained how it plans to crack down on water pollution that often contains manure, antibiotics and chemicals, the groups argue. (*TheGuardian.com*)

Fighting plastics plant

Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s philanthropic organization took an aggressive stance against the plastics industry with a new campaign to stop proposed petrochemical plants from becoming a reality. Bloomberg Philanthropies’ \$85 million Beyond Petrochemicals campaign aims to “turbocharge” ongoing efforts from grassroots groups to stop the construction of new plastic production facilities in Louisiana, Texas and the Ohio River Valley. These already-industrialized areas have been slated for dozens of facilities, and experts and environmental advocates are concerned that further development will only exacerbate the regions’ disproportionate public health problems. (*Grist.org*)

Endangered Species Act

A key U.S. conservation law lacks the resources to help most imperiled species fully recover, according to a study published in the journal PLOS. The study suggests that the failures of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which remains one of the strongest conservation measures in the world, stem from insufficient funding and a tendency to offer protection too late, when population sizes have already severely diminished. While thousands of species have been listed by the ESA since it was passed in 1973, only 54 have recovered to the point where they no longer require protection. (*TheNewLede.org*)

Cactus crops

Often treated as a weed, nopal or prickly pear cactus has great potential as a crop. A sustainability superhero, declared by the United Nations as a food of the future, cacti are drought resistant, can improve soil health and, because they reach maturity every six months, can be harvested faster than many other crops. But nopaloes are not a mainstream crop—at least not yet. Farmers, researchers and companies across the U.S. and Mexico are working to create a larger market for cacti. (*ModernFarmer.com*)

A Wunderground of coffee and wellness

By Rebekah Denn

Jody Hall is a familiar name in coffee—and causes.

Early in her career, she “grew up” along with Starbucks, working as a marketing manager for the company while it expanded from around 30 stores to 3,000. As an entrepreneur, she founded Cupcake Royale/ Verite Coffee and then The Goodship cannabis company, using her Northwest business platforms to back LGBTQ+ rights and health care, equity and community.

Wunderground Coffee, Hall’s newest venture, blends coffee with “adaptogenic” mushroom extracts (aimed at stress management rather than sustenance), “taking the most ritualistic beverage in the world... and adding wellness to it.” The ground coffee is now available at PCC stores, plus online and at Hall’s flagship store on Capitol Hill. PCC delis serve a “mushroom mocha” with a Wunderground booster, which can be added to any other milk-based drink, and the co-op promoted it as a benefit for balance, restoration and boosted immunity.

Through the partnership Wunderground became a certified organic company, as required under PCC’s coffee sustainability standards. As a major commodity, coffee “needs to be clean and green, right? And we can lead by example,” Hall said.

Mushroom supplements like Chaga, Reishi and Lion’s Mane are far better established in Eastern medicine than in the U.S. They don’t have the same emotional resonance here as, say, chocolate frosting and rainbow sprinkles. But Hall sees Wunderground as another opportunity to break new ground, continuing the same throughline that connects her earlier work: “A business that inspires profound human connection.”

Baked That Way

When Hall opened Cupcake Royale in Seattle in 2003, cupcake shops barely registered on the national radar. Hall took out a home equity loan to finance the store, the first such business outside New York City, aiming for an independent gathering place where coffee was chosen with care, sweets made with real ingredients, and staff focused on engaging with customers.

Royale’s employees were encouraged to make eye contact with shoppers and have genuine conversations, even if brief. The cupcakes won high marks, but Hall thinks the personal emphasis also boosted its success (there are currently five Cupcake Royale branches), especially as public engagement declined in the smartphone era. “When we connect, we feel better. Our employees feel better, customers feel better.”

Over the years Hall weighed in on politics as well as recipes. She spoke with then-President Barack Obama and testified at a White House roundtable about the need for health care reform. Then she considered issues beyond business: If shoppers loved her desserts and the welcoming place she’d created, she decided, perhaps they should also know something else: “You know what, I’m gay and I’m a second class citizen. I don’t have the same rights as married people.”

In 2011 Cupcake Royale’s rainbow cupcake, dubbed “The Gay,” raised money for the It Gets Better Project for LGBTQ+ youth. Other sales backed causes like the initiative to legalize gay marriage in Washington state.

The business got a lot of hate mail for its advocacy, Hall said, but also incredible support. Same-sex marriage was legalized in Washington in 2012, and nationally three years later. Hall’s partner is now her wife.

Sailing forward

Another change in the legal landscape led to Hall’s next business, The Goodship,



focused on THC-infused candies and other sweets after cannabis was legalized in Washington for recreational use. (It was acquired by Privateer Holdings, a private equity firm focused on cannabis, in 2018.)

The company’s mission was to inspire “profound human connection, discovery, wonder and joy,” she said. One way to express that was an educational series that brought “the smartest people in the world to talk about their big ideas,” Hall said. That included the head of artificial intelligence at Google, sex columnist Dan Savage...and mycology pioneer Paul Stamets, founder of the Fungi Perfecti company and author of a viral TED talk on mushrooms’ wondrous potential. (Read more about Stamets, an early PCC member, at pccmarkets.com/r/6307.)

“When I heard him speak about mushrooms and how they can save the planet... that’s when the idea for Wunderground came up,” Hall said. “It kind of ties together everything I’m passionate about. It ties in the connection of coffee and community, it ties in the coffeehouse environment, it ties in wellness.”

Bringing back the band

With Wunderground, Hall has the advantage of contacts from her years at Starbucks and at Verite, where she was the first Seattle account for Stumptown Coffee, the then-small premium Portland roastery.

“There are a lot of people that came

on board to help us figure out sourcing, supply chain, roasting curve, formulation,” she said. “We’re working with the person who built R&D at Starbucks to formulate our product,” a woman who fortuitously went on to years studying adaptogenic mushrooms. “A bunch of our investors and advisors come from coffee.”

On its own, sourcing premium coffee for a small company is a labor-intensive job that requires building relationships and figuring out how to support farmers and maintain standards while staying financially afloat.

Adding mushroom infusions is a whole other level of complexity, from finding the raw material (most is sourced from China, where the majority is currently produced) to figuring out how to blend the additions with the coffee. The goal was “to be the most delicious and the most potent, so it tastes good and you really feel the benefits,” Hall said.

Wunderground uses the fruiting body of organic mushrooms grown on wood, rather than the mycelium that grows underground (supplements typically use ground mycelium). The company presents the mushrooms as a balancing agent to improve focus, an antioxidant-packed “thermostat in our body to regulate stress, cortisol, anxiety and even caffeine.”

It’s somewhat uncharted ground. There are few peer-reviewed medical studies in the U.S. on mushroom’s benefits, though Hall notes that “the U.S. is way behind on

that. These have been used for thousands of years, especially in Eastern cultures.”

The National Cancer Institute notes that certain medicinal mushrooms have been approved as an addition to standard cancer treatments in Japan and China, that they have been used to fight infections in Asia for hundreds of years, and that they are currently being studied to assess their effects on the immune system, among other possibilities.

Wunderground has hired a medical advisor, one of the first physicians to go through a course on using adaptogenic mushrooms for healing. The company hopes she can further their research, adding more health-related data to the existing discussions on caramelization and cupping, smallholder farmers and superfoods. Hall’s ready to keep figuring it out, though the basic mission was clear to her from the start.

“We already drink coffee every day,” she said. “Let’s just make it better.”

Tasting Wunderground

See what Wunderground Coffee is all about at in-store demos at PCC stores. They are scheduled from **10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Jan. 5 at Columbia City PCC,
Jan. 6 at Ballard PCC,
Jan. 7 at Central District PCC,
Jan. 12 at Green Lake Village PCC,
Jan. 13 at Burien PCC and
Jan. 14 at West Seattle PCC.

As a PCC membership benefit, PCC members can enjoy a free shot of “brain wash” mushroom booster to any espresso drink purchased at Wunderground’s café, 1111 E. Pike St.

