



BLOOMINGNEWS
Resilience | Winter 2021



BLOOMINGFOODS
CO-OP MARKET

BloomingNews is a quarterly publication providing up-to-date information on Bloomingfoods, the cooperative movement, healthful food, nutrition, and local community. Sign up to receive a copy in your inbox at www.bloomingfoods.coop!

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from your Board of Directors



As December comes to an end and January kicks off a new year, I like to reflect on all the wonderful things that have happened and set goals for the future. This year, however, as 2020 wraps up, I do not really care to reflect on everything we have survived—living through it once is enough for me! But, as our year winds down, I first want to thank you our staff, for showing up to work every day, and thanks to all of our owner members, who continue to shop at and support Bloomingfoods.

We are more than a grocery store; we have more to do than put food on shelves

Like everyone in our community, Bloomingfoods, too, has had a challenging year. New, and constantly changing regulations, food shortages, illness, and fear have made it difficult to confidently run our business and continue to meet our Ends. We are more than a grocery store; we have more to do than put food on shelves.

Our owner members and staff have allowed Bloomingfoods to be resilient; to continue weathering the storm and maneuvering changes and challenges, while still maintaining a culture that is so important to us all. I continue to appreciate the friendly vibe of our stores, even if I can no longer see smiling faces, the stocked shelves, and knowledge that we are able to support other businesses in our community through the round-up program. Because of our supportive owner members and dedicated staff, we withstood the challenges of this year and are planning for 2021 and beyond.

I am nervously excited for what 2021 has lined up for us all. More this year than before, I am proud to be an owner member and board member of Bloomingfoods. We are stronger coming out of 2020 than going in and I really cannot ask for more than that!

Michelle Robison
Board Vice President

JOIN OVER
13,000 OWNER-MEMBERS
TODAY!

THE COST OF OWNER-MEMBERSHIP IS JUST
A ONE-TIME FEE OF \$90. MONTHLY (\$7.50
PER MONTH) AND QUARTERLY (\$22.50 PER
QUARTER) PAYMENTS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE.

6 Things You Support

1



Better Quality Food and Ingredients
Bloomingfoods promotes healthy, high quality, sustainable, and environmentally-sound products at a fair price.

2



Sustainable Producers and Practices
Our commitment to sustainable agriculture, artisanal producers of local products, and delicious regional foods are a few of the things that set us apart.

3



Fair Wages and Good Working Conditions
Since 1976, Bloomingfoods has provided jobs to the local community. It's worth noting that 44% of our staff have a length of service of at least two years.

4



Our Local Economy
Last fiscal year, Bloomingfoods put over \$5 million directly back into our community through payments to local farmers and vendors, payments to staff, and Positive Change donations.

5



Local Producers and Vendors
The Co-op supports nearly 100 local vendors and producers, all of which are located within the state of Indiana. We love local! Almost 13% of our sales last year were allocated to our local vendors and producers.

6



A Democratic Cooperative-Ownership Model
Co-ops are democratically owned and governed (one owner-member, one vote). Owner-members are eligible to run for the board of directors or serve on an advisory committee.



meet

JORDAN MAXEDON

east deli manager



If you've ever enjoyed a \$3 dinner, an exciting new grab-n-go item, or a tasty made-to-order sandwich, there's a good chance Jordan had something to do with it.

How long have you worked for the Co-op?

I have worked for Bloomingfoods since October of 2010. In those 10 years there was only 9 months that I didn't work for the Co-op.

Did your view of the Co-op change when you left and came back to work here?

Working in a deli for a different company really put a lot of things in perspective for me. After starting my other job I quickly started missing the Co-op. For me, it's hard to work for a place that doesn't share similar cultural values to those of my own. Also, I really missed the quality of the food. I guess I was feeling kind of homesick and thankfully the Co-op was in a position to hire me back. Nearly everything was the same when I returned to Bloomingfoods. But times were a lot different at the Co-op at that time 3 years ago. It was quite an uphill climb for the deli to get to where we are now. I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish in the last 3 years.

What positions have you held at Bloomingfoods?

In my time here at Bloomingfoods I have been a part-time cook, a full-time cook, West Kitchen Manager, Commissary Assistant Manager,

West Deli Assistant Manager, West Deli Manager and now I am the East Deli Manager.

Why did you want to work at Bloomingfoods?

I remember shopping at the East Store after my parents would pick me up from preschool. So Bloomingfoods has been in my life for a very long time. As I got older I would oftentimes grab a sandwich out of the deli either at the East or West Store. I remember being impressed by the quality of the food. Even at that time (2006-ish) I thought it would be cool to work here. The people seemed happy to be at work and it looked like something I wanted to be a part of.

Do you have a favorite memory from working at Bloomingfoods?

I have quite a few favorite memories from working here. But I will choose a more recent memory, and that would be one of the earlier \$3 dinners that we did out of the West Store kitchen. The night I'm thinking of we ended up selling 565 dinners! Obviously selling dinner for \$3 a plate isn't about making a bunch of money, but it was so awesome to see a program that was so well received by the public and created an atmosphere of excitement at the Co-op. It was nice to be a part of that kind of hustle and bustle.

What have been some of the biggest struggles in the deli this year during the Covid 19 restrictions?

I think one of the toughest things at the beginning was identifying what things we needed to stop doing right away. When you sell food a certain way for so long it seems weird to do things like shut down the hot bar and salad bar. So your next immediate question becomes, "How do we get food to people safely?" And we tried to react as quickly as possible to the situation. We have expanded our Grab & Go prepacked entrée and prepacked salad options, offer premade burritos on our hot bar, and have seen a lot of success with selling soup that is prepackaged. We do hope to see hot bar and salad bar return at a time when it can be safe but for the time being we are trying to identify even more new and different ways to get prepared foods to our customers.



"We are constantly thinking of new ways to better serve our customers."



NOTE: IMAGES USED ON PAGES 8 AND 9 WERE TAKEN PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

What are some of your favorite foods and products from our stores?

Currently my two favorite things we make in my department are the Shredded Chicken Burrito and the Thai Noodle Salad. Both are absolutely delicious. And a cool thing about the Thai Noodle Salad is that it is both vegan and wheat-free so it also can tick a lot of boxes for certain dietary needs.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

When I'm not at work, I enjoy fishing, listening to podcasts, and drawing when I get the time.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your job or thoughts about Bloomingfoods?

This year has been really challenging in many ways but for the Co-op at least we are seeing a lot of positive things. We feel very thankful to be able to be there for our community. We are constantly thinking of new ways to better serve our customers. We will all make it through this together and thank you to our community for your support this year. 🌱

POSITIVE CHANGE IN 2021

Meet our 2021 Positive Change recipients! We're excited to support such a diverse and impactful mix of community partners. Each recipient plays a critical role in enriching our community.

Wonderlab
Museum
of Science,
Health, &
Technology

Farm to
Family
Fund, Inc

Buskirk-
Chumley
Theater

Hotels
for
Homeless

Friends of
the Monroe
County
Public
Library

Big Brothers
Big Sisters
of South
Central
Indiana

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

Bloomington
PRIDE

Black
Lives
Matter
B-town

Middle
Way
House

Bloomingsfoods

Pantry
279

Center
for
Sustainable
Living

Get to Know an Owner-Member

GRACIA VALLIANT

Gracia first started shopping at Bloomingfoods in the early 80's. Later she became an owner-member and eventually served on the Board of Directors. Gracia has been active in the Bloomington community and abroad for decades volunteering and supporting various non-profits and serving on several committees and boards.

Gracia grew up in Virginia. She eventually left and traveled to Honduras to join the Peace Corp. There she met her husband. The two moved around quite a bit until they eventually settled in Greene County, Indiana (40 minutes southwest from Bloomington) in 1978.

“We lived in a cabin and raised our own food. That was an experience for me. We didn't have running water and I'd never canned anything in my life. I learned how to make bread... all the things you try to do when you're trying to be self-sustaining.”

Gracia and her husband both worked in Bloomington at the time and their children attended the Harmony School. In 1985 they sold their land and moved to Bloomington where they have lived since.

Gracia first started shopping at the Co-op in the early 80's. “I started shopping when it was over in the alley (the Kirkwood Store).”

Her path to owner-membership took

some time because of a common misunderstanding.

“It was funny, I don't know what my husband was thinking but I was saying we need to join the Co-op, and he kept saying no. And finally I asked him why and he said that \$90 a month is a lot to spend. And I said, no, this is forever. I mean it's \$90 until we decide we don't want to become a member anymore.”

For decades, Gracia has been a frequent shopper at the Co-op. Staff friendliness and cooperative principles are just a few of the things that keep her coming back.

“When I walk into the Co-op people know who I am. There are several cashiers who know my number by heart. I'm 78 years old and I grew up in a community where wherever you shop they know who you were. That's important to me. For me to know them and them to know me. It's a relationship that we build that I think is important.”

GRACIA WITH PETRONA, ESTUARDO, & BILLY
IN SAN JUAN LA LAGUNA IN 2007



“I think finding ways to continue to feed my spirit and my connection is what has helped me get through the last 10 months.”



GRACIA AT
GLOBAL GIFTS IN
BLOOMINGTON

“The other thing is that I believe in co-ops. I have seen co-ops work. When I was a child there was a big supermarket that my parents were involved with. They even had their own brand of products. And so I grew up knowing about co-ops. And then I’ve seen in Central America the value of co-ops. How they support the community. How they support people. Co-ops do things that have principle behind them and have values.”

As passionate as Gracia is about co-ops, she’s equally passionate about fair trade. She has directly seen the positive impact of both through her humanitarian work in Central America.

“I’ve been involved in Central America since the middle 60’s. During the war in Guatemala I went down as a human

rights worker. After that I went and visited an area around Lake Atitlan. There was a watermelon run NGO that was tiny then but now has grown. They had small co-ops that they were supporting. Textiles and paintings and pottery and things like that. And all of a sudden I’m looking at this and I’m going, “Wow, look at this, these people have livelihood”. And I didn’t really know fair trade then. I came back from one of my trips and shortly after that Global Gifts opened. I went in and talked to Dave Debikey (Global Gifts Bloomington, Store Manager) and said how does this work? How do these artisans get their products sold? And he talked to me about fair trade. Shortly after that I began volunteering there, and then got to see the world wide implications of fair trade.”

“For me it is one of the prime ways

that we can really help people really get out of poverty. It changes the dynamic in a community and in a family. In my view it’s the way we should be working everywhere. They get a fair price for what they make based on their economy.”

Like many, Gracia has had to be resilient and adaptive throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Gracia cites Bloomingfoods and our staff as key supports.

“This is a staff that has really stepped up for customers... particularly older customers during this time. I go in if I need one or two things but if I’d have to spend a lot of time in the store I just order online. They are so careful. I always buy fair trade bananas and the last time I forgot to mark fair trade bananas (in her online shopping cart)

but I still had fair trade bananas in my bag. They are very careful when they shop for me. I have appreciated that so much.”

“The Co-op certainly has been resilient. There’s definitely resilience among staff, board members, and owner-members.”

Beyond Bloomingfoods, Gracia continues to find outlets in various non-profit work. She has continued to volunteer at Global Gifts and she has worked to raise money and awareness for her friends in Guatemala who are struggling.

“I think finding ways to continue to feed my spirit and my connection is what has helped me get through the last 10 months.” 🌟

ON THE FARM

Joseph Fischer is very proud of his family's farm. He talked to us about the history and future of Fischer Farms, as well as how this past year has affected their business and why they choose to partner with other local farms and vendors.

How and when did Fischer Farms get started?

The Fischer Family farm has been in our family since the Civil War. We purchased the farm from the sheriff when the veteran did not return. It has been in our family ever since. We started selling our meat direct in 2004 because we felt that conventional animal production had lost sight of the quality and health implications of practices that have become industry standard. We sought out to produce top quality beef in a natural way (without growth hormones, antibiotics, fillers, saline solution, MSG, dyes, etc.) and also in a sustainable way. We found that there was really no market at the time for cattle raised in this way so we started selling directly to local restaurants and retail stores.

How long have you been working at the farm and what is your history in farming?

I have been working on the farm since I was a kid. After college and a few years in the corporate world, I returned to the family business in 2019.

What is your job title?

I work primarily in a sales role, focusing on supporting our existing customers with product questions, menu updates, etc. and telling the story of Fischer Farms to potential new customers.

What is your favorite job to do on the farm?

Moving cattle from one pasture to another is my favorite. When we move them, we "call" them to let them know it's time to move and they follow us through the gate. Regardless of how much they have to eat in the existing pasture, they are always excited to move. It truly is a "grass is always greener" scenario as they joyfully prance into the new field.

How is your family involved in the farm?

It is very much a family business. My dad, Dave, focuses primarily on the farm operations. My mom, Diana, focuses primarily on the order fulfillment side of the house. She takes all the orders each week and makes sure the right cuts get to the right customer. My grandpa Joe, who has lived his entire life on the farm except for a brief stint in the army is "retired" but still keeps busy supervising and running errands to pick up parts. Diana's parents, Dave and Rita Blessinger, are also involved helping us run emergency deliveries.

How many people do you employ?

In addition to the group above, we have four employees that work on the farm, Isaac, Cory, Tony, and Ethan. We also employ three other employees on the order fulfillment side, Denise, Lydia, and Aaron. Almost all of our employees have worked with us for over five years.

What makes Fischer Farms different than other farms?

We continue to push the limits of sustainability and regenerative agriculture while producing top quality meat. We are passionate about improving soil and water health, working to REVERSE climate change through carbon capture. We calculate that our farm is actually carbon negative and an example of how responsible agriculture can have a lasting positive impact on our environment. Some of the specific regenerative agriculture practices:

- We have built a network of 7 ponds and a man-made wetland that captures and filters the water used for our cattle.
- In the last 4 years we have doubled the organic matter (carbon) in our soil
- Tripled our topsoil in the last 7 years

Do you provide custom cuts and special orders?

Yes, very much so. We custom cut our beef and pork fresh each week based on incoming orders. We can do everything from French cut pork chops to hamburger sliders to marrow bones and everything in between!

Why are sustainability programs important to Fischer Farms?

Sustainability programs are important to us because we feel that we all have an obligation to leave our planet better than we found it. If as individuals we prioritize sustainability and support businesses that do the same, we can make a significant impact. Agriculture specifically has a lot of opportunity to prioritize sustainability initiatives that will have a lasting impact. We focus most of our sustainability efforts on soil health, carbon sequestering, and water conservation/filtration but try to incorporate sustainability practices across everything we do.

What are some of your most popular products?

Our steaks, burgers, pork chops, and bacon are our usual top sellers. This time of year, our smoked turkey breast, pot roasts, and breakfast sausage are also very popular!

How has your farm been affected by the pandemic this year?

Restaurants have traditionally made up the majority of our sales. The pandemic has forced many of our restaurant customers to reduce their capacity or close indoor dining. Since we have to sell the whole animal, we were faced with an imbalance in cuts that we relied on these restaurant customers to take each week so we were forced to reduce the number we butchered each week and seek out new "homes" for some of the

cuts that we now have excess of. We were thankful to have partners such as Bloomingfoods who continued to buy products from us as consumers began cooking more meals at home.

Have you noticed how other local farms or food vendors have been affected by the pandemic?

The pandemic forced many farms to quickly pivot to new sales models. Local farms were faced with excess product, a lot of which was time-sensitive. We saw some farmers face processor/demand constraints that resulted in livestock that was ready to butcher but without a place to send them. Some of our produce farmer friends had fresh vegetables that did not have restaurants or farmers markets to take their products too.



Why do you partner with other local farms and food vendors?

Our goal has always been to make it as easy as possible for retail stores, individuals, and restaurants to source local food products. In addition to the beef grown on our farm, we partner with our neighbors to sell pork, turkey, eggs, and produce grown on their farms. By partnering together, we can increase the efficiency of our supply chain, all while making it easier for the end customer to get the farm fresh food they are looking for. During the pandemic, we added more partners to our farm network to help them move products they had available such as Capriole Goat Cheese, Raber Family Produce, Red Frazier Bison, and even honeycomb and local Tell City Pretzels.

When did you begin working with Bloomingfoods?

We started working with Bloomingfoods in 2005! We started selling direct in 2004 so Bloomingfoods was one of our first customers and has been an incredible partner throughout the last 15 years! Bloomingfoods' emphasis on supporting local farmers has been so impactful to the Southern Indiana local food system.



How can our shoppers best support you during this time?

They can continue to purchase our products at Bloomingfoods and spread the word! Sharing social media posts and telling friends/family about us is a big way many small businesses grow so we greatly appreciate any and all support! You can find us on social media @FischerFarmsIN

Is there anything new happening at Fischer Farms or do you have plans for the future?

Right now we are doing some experimenting with new forages for our pastures and are also developing new products. We also post regular farm updates on our website (www.ffnatural.com) and on our social media accounts so we do our best to keep you updated with all the happenings on the farm! 📍



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: A tasty cut of Fischer Farms beef; Fischer cows grazing in turnips and rye; Dave, Diana, and Joseph Fischer; the Fischer farmhouse





A Guide to Winter Squash

Choosing a winter squash to prepare can be confounding—here are common varieties of squashes you’ll love.

Winter squash are harvested late summer through fall, then cured or “hardened off” in open air to toughen their exterior. This process ensures the squash will keep for months without refrigeration. When selecting any variety of winter squash, the stem is the best

indication of ripeness. Stems should be tan, dry and on some varieties, look fibrous, frayed or corky. Fresh green stems or those leaking sap signal that the squash was harvested before it was completely ripe. Ripe squash has a vivid, saturated color and a matte, rather than glossy, finish.

Check out the plentiful winter squash recipes and articles at welcometothetable.coop/winter-squash



Acorn

Mild, versatile flavor and a tender-firm texture that holds up well when cooked. Hard rind helps squash hold its shape when baked.

Best uses: baked, stuffed, cubed and added to grain salads



Blue Hubbard

This huge squash is perfect for feeding a crowd! Bright orange flesh has a buttery, nutty flavor and a dry, flaky texture similar to baked potato.

Best uses: baked, mashed and topped with butter, sea salt and black pepper



Butternut

Vivid orange flesh is sweet and slightly nutty with a smooth texture that falls apart as it cooks. Rind is edible but squash is usually peeled before use.

Best uses: soups, purees, recipes where smooth texture is highlighted



Delicata

Rich, sweet, flavorful yellow flesh tastes like a mix of chestnuts, corn and sweet potato. Quick-cooking with a thin, edible skin. Highly seasonal.

Best uses: sautéed until caramelized, broiled, baked

Kabocha (Green/Red)

Smooth, dense, intensely yellow flesh that is similar in sweetness and texture to sweet potato.

Best uses: curries, soups, battered and fried as Japanese tempura



Pie Pumpkin

Mildly sweet squash with a rich pumpkin flavor, perfect for pies and baked goods. Different from carving pumpkins, these are bred for sweetness and size.

Best uses: pies, custards, baked goods, curries and stews



Red Kuri

Vivid orange, mildly sweet and smooth, dense squash with a delicious chestnut-like flavor. Makes a rich and velvety puree.

Best uses: Thai curries, soups, pilafs and gratins, baked goods



Spaghetti

Pale golden interior is stringy and dense – in a good way! Use a fork to pry apart cooked flesh which resembles spaghetti in texture and mild flavor.

Best uses: baked and separated, then dressed as you would pasta



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Please email your name, member number, and updated contact information to info@bloomingfoods.coop.

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Winter Squash

Cinnamon Apple Stuffed Squash

Serves 4-6. Total Time: 60 minutes.

2 acorn squash, cut in half, seeds removed
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 cups diced yellow onion
2 celery stalks, diced
3 cups diced apple, cored and seeds removed
(about 2 large apples)
½ cup dried cranberries
2 tablespoons maple syrup
⅓ cup water
½ teaspoon cinnamon
Pinch each of salt and black pepper

Slice the stuffed squash halves into wedges to serve as a side with ham, turkey or chicken, or serve each half as a vegetarian entrée.

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Place acorn squash halves face down on a rimmed sheet pan or baking dish and add ½ inch of water to the pan. Bake squash for 40 minutes.
2. While the squash is baking, heat the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and celery and sauté for 5 to 10 minutes until soft. Add the apples, cranberries, maple syrup, water and cinnamon; stir well and cook another 5 to 10 minutes until the apples begin to soften. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat.
3. After the squash has baked for 40 minutes, remove from the oven, turn them cut side up and fill each with the apple stuffing. Place back into the oven and bake another 15 to 20 minutes until the squash is tender. Serve warm.

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EAST

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IVY TECH (currently closed)

200 Daniels Way Rm D109
Bloomington, IN 47404
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stay resilient

