

Rollin' Oats Journal

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF LINDEN HILLS CO-OP GROCERY & DELI

How a St. Paul Nanny Grew a Business and Raised the Bar on Baby Food

BY KATHY GERHARDT

Picture, if you will, a cherubic little baby with downy skin and chubby cheeks. Then think of feeding that innocent little one some of the healthiest, most flavorful food you can imagine and you start to get a sense of what drives Lori Karis, the one-woman dynamo behind Sweet Cheeks™ Baby Food.

"Sweet Cheeks' is just the perfect name," she commented. "Especially at the age when babies start eating food, they just get so round and are at this beautiful stage of being content and happy."

Use What You Know

As a professional nanny for over 25 years, Karis is extremely familiar with that stage in a child's life. Throughout her career, she's made her own organic baby food and kept abreast of the latest news in childhood development and nutrition. Roughly three years ago, with encouragement from a Mendota Heights family she was working for, Karis began researching and seriously considering turning her handmade, organic baby food into a business. After all, who wouldn't want baby food, made weekly, using only fresh, locally grown organic fruits, vegetables and grains?

Almost immediately she needed a commercial kitchen and to be licensed through the state's Department of Agriculture. Luckily, she found a group called "Women Who Really Cook."

"I posted [on their bulletin board] on a Friday night that I was looking for a commercial kitchen space and by Saturday at noon, I had nine responses," she recalled in amazement. Karis accepted the offer from the owner of Jessica's Cakes. "There was no minimum I had to meet. If I wasn't there, I didn't have to pay. That was huge for overhead and startup costs."

Next, Karis forged a partnership with Mississippi Market Co-op to help her source organic produce, particularly when it's not in season here in Minnesota. Her acceptance into the St. Paul Farmer's Market opened lots of doors to local organic farmers and so far she's worked with Whole Grain Milling, Featherstone Farm, Driftless Organics, Riverbend Farm and Old Orchard.

The Packaging—and What's in It

While recipes had been perfected over her many years of caring for children, lots of trial and error went into packaging and labeling. Karis' products are packaged in BPA-free plastic pouches.

"They are sturdy enough to protect the food in the freezer and they ship flat, allowing thousands to be shipped in a small box which is great from both a carbon footprint aspect as well as a financial one," explained Karis. "The food goes into the pouches frozen and I encourage my customers to remove it to another container for thawing and heating."

So what delectable meals are in these pouches? And why has she been asked "What do you do to it? It tastes so good!" It's pretty simple.

"It's organic, it's local and it's roasted. That's it. There are no fats, oils or seasonings in any of it. It is made fresh every week by hand." She added "I believe that the roasting process retains a lot more nutrition and results in a really tasty product ... to freeze it

"It's organic, it's local and it's roasted. That's it. There are no fats, oils or seasonings in any of it."



Sweet Cheeks' Lori Karis poses with her "Big Orange Umbrella" at the St. Paul Farmer's Market.

on top of that, it retains the texture. The taste and the consistency are better than the canning process."

Her product line has three levels: "Newbies," "Combos" and "Baby 'roles'"—baby casseroles. Common ingredients found in Sweet Cheeks food include butternut squash, apples, sweet potatoes, parsnips, pears, brown rice, and millet. Her bestseller is the combination of beets, carrots and brown rice. Unsure customers asking for advice get steered toward the beets. "Doubters always come back for a 6-pack. Always!" she chuckled.

For now, Karis does it all. She's the buyer, cook, packager, labeler, marketer, seller and distributor. Her hard work and long hours have paid off. Sweet Cheeks is now available in 11 different retail locations, including Linden Hills Co-op, along with two restaurants. She's also added a line of organic vegan soups for adults, along with an oatmeal line called "Sweet Cereals."

But there is no confusion about the driving force of her business. Everything she makes is baby-friendly and Karis cites the New England Journal of Medicine (2007) when she says that this generation of kids is expected to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents, so "it just makes sense to me that the best and freshest foods should be given to the baby and that will always be my main priority."

FYI Co-op Shoppers

The New Co-op Deal

Starting in September, you'll notice some changes to our sales flyer, sales signs, coupon books and other materials provided by National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA), the national association of which we're a member. NCGA negotiates sales on a nationwide level, at prices we wouldn't be able to attain as an individual co-op.

coop deals NCGA is launching a new brand, "Co+op, stronger together." Besides the new logo

and fresh new look, you'll see more deals, more often, including quarterly coupon books and twice the number of sales flyers. That means you'll receive two bi-weekly sales flyers per month, with an increase in the total number of sales. So what's the deal? With Co+op, we're stronger, together.

Lights, Camera, Asparagus!

In love with leeks? Swoon at the smell of spices in the bulk section? Giddy over gluten-free? Falling for a farmer? The nationwide My Co-op Rocks Video Contest is back! Participants are encouraged to unleash their sense of humor and creativity. Whether shooting with a cell phone or in high-definition digital video, individuals over the age of 18 of all skill levels are welcome to shoot, edit and submit their video with an original, food co-op-related theme. Submit your video beginning Sept. 1 at www.MyCoopRocks.coop. A total of \$3,000 in prizes will be awarded to winners in the "People's Choice" and "Judges' Choice" categories.



Member Coupons

Turn to page 3 and you'll notice your Member Coupons have changed. Starting August 1st, you'll be able to use both coupons on groceries from the co-op. And, you'll still be able to use your coupons at Natural Home, too. We made the change in anticipation of Natural Home's move to our new Sunnyside location where it will be incorporated into the co-op. Please note that, until we move, these coupons are valid on goods purchased at either Linden Hills Co-op or Natural Home. After the move, the coupons will be valid on goods purchased in the co-op, including the Natural Home department.

We haven't made any changes to the total value of your member discount. You'll still be able to receive 10% off a purchase of up to \$50, two times per bi-monthly newsletter period. In other words, your total discount will still amount to \$60 per year if you take full advantage of the offer. Even better, your discounts will now be more flexible, since you'll be able to apply them to groceries and/or home items—it's your choice!

Eat Local, Linden Hills

Along with co-ops across the country, Linden Hills Co-op is hosting "Eat Local, America!" this August. You know we support local farmers year 'round. But especially during Eat Local, America, we encourage you to intentionally increase local foods in your diet. Eating locally benefits the environment and the local economy, not to mention your palate! Whether you eat one meal a week made with local foods or make 80 percent of your diet locally-produced, the goal is up to you. Join the conversation at www.eatlocalamerica.coop. Seek support from our staff, pick up a comprehensive list of our local offerings at the customer service desk, or sign up for the Local Produce Watch e-newsletter by emailing allie@lindenhills.coop.



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Board meetings are the third Wednesday of each month and any co-op member is welcome to attend—please email or call the co-op a couple of days in advance: info@lindenhills.coop or 612-922-1159. You may also email the board at board@lindenhills.coop.

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International Principles of Cooperation

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

Rollin' Oats Journal

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Linden Hills Co-op's web site is at www.lindenhills.coop. Visit us on Facebook, too!

Linden Hills Co-op and Linden Hills Natural Home are proud members of the National Cooperative Grocers Association.



BOARD REPORT

The Solar Panels: Past and Future

BY THE LINDEN HILLS CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The solar panels on top of the Linden Hills Co-op have been around for just over three years. The idea for solar panels began around 2002 and involved the co-op and the surrounding community over several years. The project was called "Rays the Roof," with the purpose of creating a community action to demonstrate solar power can be brought to use now, educate the community, and provide a portion of the co-op's power.

Donations in support of the project—nearly \$62,000—were given by the co-op, its members, Linden Hills area businesses and churches, the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council (LHINC), and other supportive individuals. A rebate from the State of Minnesota for \$18,360 also helped fund the system. With gratitude for such support and community spirit, the co-op saw the project completed with the installation of a 54 panel system by Innovative Power Systems (IPS) and a number of volunteers during May of 2007.

How has the system performed? It has indeed generated power. Data shows it has produced an average of 9,300 kwh per year, close to the anticipated 10,000 kwh per year. How much has this helped the co-op with its power needs? The co-op's power needs are great—something around 560,000 kwh per year! While the solar panels are working to generate power, it represents a small fraction (around 1.6 %) of what the co-op uses each year.

Given the cost and technology of the system, the price of solar power is still rather high. Assuming this system produces power at the same rate for the next 27 years and incurs no further costs (not actually realistic), the cost of this power generation will be about 22 cents

per kwh. This is quite a bit more than typical conventional electricity costs, around 5-6 cents per kwh. It is important to note, however, that the solar panels do not contribute to pollution and carbon dioxide production, which are "costs" that other means of power generation do not account for.

So, what does the future of solar power look like? We have demonstrated generation of electricity from the sun does work, but it is apparent the high price and long payback of an unsubsidized system have a way to go before we will see solar-generated power broadly applied. There is no doubt, however, that it will continue to expand into more and more common use.

More specifically, what is to become of the system atop the co-op? This issue is not fully resolved, but we can make some general comments. As we have seen, the cost of solar power is high at our current level of technology. If the co-op were to move the system, it is estimated that we would spend a minimum of \$30,000. This would increase the cost per kwh of the electricity the panels produce as well as the payback time. Given the system covers such a small fraction of the co-op power needs, it would be best financially to leave the panels where they are, where they would continue to produce power over the years, with a minimum of additional expense. The money saved would be better applied to other green designs at the new co-op location.

This does not have to mean that solar power for the Linden Hills Co-op is over, however. With newer technology, lower costs, and anticipated new rebates and subsidies, we may find it viable to consider again as this means of power generation matures.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Dr. in the Kitchen's Alison Levitt, M.D.

BY KATHY GERHARDT

"You are what you eat." It's a phrase we've all heard numerous times before, but there may not be many who believe in it more than one of Linden Hills Co-op's newest members, Dr. Alison Levitt, MD. She's an urgent care doctor with a private practice based on holistic medicine, and Levitt is acutely aware of the health crisis facing this country due in large part to the foods most Americans eat. As such, she's a firm believer in awareness and choice.

"If you live in Minnesota, you are going breath Minnesota air; you can't change that. But you can change whether you put an organic strawberry in your body or a non-organic strawberry in your body," she stated. "If we don't start making healthier choices about what we put in our bodies and on our bodies then the crisis is just going to grow."

Levitt isn't just another healthcare professional sounding the panic alarm. She's someone who is taking an active role in offering information, advice and healthy food alternatives. As the doctor of "Doctor in the Kitchen," Levitt writes an engaging blog about food and health, and also has a product line of flax seed crackers called "flackers."

Originally, these flax seed crackers were something she perfected in her kitchen as something healthy for her to snack on.

"I've always thought flax was one of the cheapest, best medicines that people can buy," said Levitt. "You get Omega 3s, fiber and plant lignans—which are really important for women to prevent breast cancer and colon cancer. I don't know if there is such a thing as a miracle food, but it is a super food."

Once she created a recipe that would please the palates of a wide variety of people, Levitt began sharing these "super food" crackers with patients in her office along with some tea. Her excitement and desire to

explain the advantages of the crackers quickly enlightened her clients. Fiber, protein and anti-oxidants are just the start of the healthful benefits.

"There is no sugar. They are gluten-free and yeast-free. So, people who have allergies can eat this." And unlike rice substitutes, which spike blood sugar, Levitt added, "Here's a food that's fat and fiber—really healthy fats, Omega 3s and fiber. So it does the opposite—it lowers the effect of sugar in your system. It helps your digestion, helps your heart and helps your joints."

While clients enjoyed their crackers and tea, Levitt was interested in reaching even more people. Earlier in her career she worked for both Aveda and Horst Rechelbacher's Intelligent Nutrients, which provided inspiration.

"I have the knowledge to be able to design functional foods and nutraceuticals—foods that are meant to be really super healthy for you. [Horst] hired me to design the food and ... I did have a glimpse of what it's like to bring something to market."

What she needed was a "yin" to her "yang." Enter Donn Kelly, "a seasoned food marketer," whom she stumbled upon while he was walking his dog. Together they formed Doctor in the Kitchen™, and now three flavors of Flackers™ can be found at Linden Hills Co-op and throughout the Midwest, California and the Pacific Northwest.

"The goal of Dr. in the Kitchen initially was to create a line of super-healthy foods," said Levitt. "The idea is to have people say, 'Oh, Dr. in the Kitchen, I can trust that. I don't even have to read the label. I know it is going to be low sodium. I know there isn't going to be a lot of sugar and I know there won't be a lot of calories. I'm going to buy it,



Alison Levitt shows off her line of Flackers flax seed crackers.

because I know I can trust it."

Levitt is working on new products to add to her food line and has also incorporated a blog into Doctor in the Kitchen.

"I've always written; it is a passion for me," commented Levitt. "Right now it is fun, because I have a garden and I can talk about how things are growing and what things you can eat. It's about eating healthy, so I love it and I love sharing it with people."

While Levitt excitedly talks about the expansion of her business, one wonders if her medical career still fits in her life. She's quick to answer.

"I'm always going to be a doctor. I may not always be practicing at urgent care, but I will never stop being a doctor and I will never stop wanting to learn how to heal people in any way that is available—the best way." She also added, "Keeping my hands in medicine is important. But when I think about who I am and what my passion is—it really is about Dr. in the Kitchen and my holistic practice. That's really more of who I am."

As we look forward to opening our new, expanded co-op at 3815 Sunnyside Ave in September, we'd like to take a moment to appreciate members who invested in the Relocation & Expansion Project. If you invested in the project, but your name is not listed below, we do not have your signed public release form on file. If you'd like to be recognized, please email allie@lindenhills.coop to obtain a public release form.

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Member Specials

KANGAROO KOMER
Baby Slings
 MEMBERS \$57.99
 Nonmembers \$67.99
 Locally made in Little Canada, MN

OUR DELI'S
Afghan Potatoes
 MEMBERS \$6.99/lb
 Nonmembers \$7.99/lb
 Made with locally grown potatoes, organic tomatoes & savory spices

Bulk Special

EQUAL EXCHANGE
French Roast Coffee
 SALE \$7.99/lb
 Fair Trade, organic, regularly \$9.99/lb

Trocery Specials

MOM'S BEST
Cereals
 SALE \$2.49
 Locally made in Northfield, regularly \$3.99

GREEK GODS
Greek-Style Yogurt
 SALE \$1.19
 6 ounces, regularly \$1.99

CASCADIAN FARM
Frozen Fruit
 SALE \$2.99
 10 ounces, regularly \$4.29

BACK TO NATURE
Crackers
 SALE \$2.49
 4-6.5 ounces, regularly \$3.69

BLUE SKY
Soda
 SALE \$2.69
 6-packs, regularly \$3.99

PEACE
Cereal
 SALE \$3.29
 Regularly \$4.99

RUDI'S ORGANIC
Whole Wheat Bread
 SALE \$2.99
 Regularly \$4.29

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 Locally made in Waconia, MN

Wellness Specials

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Valid at Linden Hills Co-op & Natural Home 8/1 through 9/30, 2010

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10% DISCOUNT

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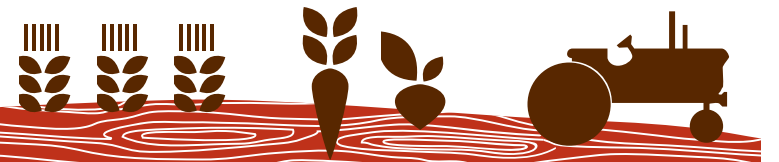
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Valid at Linden Hills Co-op & Natural Home 8/1 through 9/30, 2010

Parade to Sunnyside



By the time you slip this issue of the Rollin' Oats Journal into your recycling bin, the doors to our brand new, expanded co-op at 3815 Sunnyside Ave will be itchin' to open. Construction crews have been hard at work all summer long to meet our expected opening date in mid to late-September. **While we don't know precisely what day the new store will open, we've chosen Sunday, September 12th to mark the ceremonial transition to our new location.***

For many of us, the aisles at 2813 W. 43rd represent more than a mere storefront. As members, the co-op often becomes intertwined with our own sense of identity. So, naturally, there'll be a bit of

Sunday September 12

sadness when we make the transition to the new store. To capture this bittersweet sentiment, our "transition ceremony" will take the form of a New Orleans Jazz Funeral Parade. Leave it to Linden Hills Co-op to get quirky!

At noon, we'll gather in the courtyard at 2813 W. 43rd where we'll place co-op mementos in a time-capsule. Shortly thereafter, we'll begin parading to the new store, lead by the Jack Brass Band. A few sturdy "pall bearers" will roll the time-capsule to the new store in a wooden

wheelbarrow "casket." En route, we'll learn a little more about the co-op's history and improvements at the new store. Once we arrive at the new store, we'll serve refreshments and have plenty of time to share our co-op memories.

The parade route from the old store to the new store is less than 1 mile, but carpools will be provided for folks who cannot, or choose not to, walk. Children are encouraged to bike—and will be rewarded with prizes for the best decorated bike!

Although New Orleans is sometimes (fairly or not) associated with a bit of hedonistic excess, we want this event to be earth-friendly. So we're asking you to help us reduce & reuse by bringing your own accoutrements.

What to Bring

- Mardi Gras beads or decorations
- Pots & wooden spoons to use as make-shift "drums"
- Umbrellas
- Good walking shoes
- Co-op memorabilia for the time-capsule (old photos, newsletters, trinkets)



Or, none of the above, just yourself is enough!

* Please stay tuned to www.lindenhills.coop, look for in-store announcements, or ask a staff member to find out what day we'll be opening at the new Sunnyside location.

Sunday, August 1, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Gardens of Eagan

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Jennifer Nelson serves up fresh-roasted organic peppers today. Located less than 40 miles from the co-op, in Farmington, MN, this urban-edge vegetable farm supplies us with fresh produce, not to mention, wonderful recipes.

Wednesday, August 4, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Prairie Pride Pork

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Dawn Hubmer and husband Roger are the proud recipients of the USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program Grant, awarded for their sustainable farming practices. Sample blueberry summer sausage and hickory smoked bacon today.

Thursday, August 5, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Upper Crust Fine Foods

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Sample delectable cookies, croissants, blondies and brownies ready-to-bake from Kim Durr's Minneapolis kitchen to yours. What started as a way to provide busy families with flavorful baked goods, Upper Crust has now become a local dessert phenomenon.

Friday, August 6, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Thousand Hills Cattle Company

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Join Dorothy as she grills up summertime favorites (hot dogs, ribeyes!) fresh from Cannon Falls-based Thousand Hills Cattle Company.

Tuesday, August 10, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Lucky's Honey Mustard & Hot Sauces

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Like hot sauce? How about habanero! Want something sweet? Try Lucky's honey mustard! Made in North Mankato, Lucky's sauces will please any palate. Aren't we lucky?

Wednesday, August 11, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Thuro Bread

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> St. Paul resident Sarah Couenhoven makes her snack bars with the three super-nutritious, ancient grains: oats, spelt and amaranth.

Thursday, August 12, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Triple Crown BBQ Sauce

EVENTS

August-September

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Made in Frederic, WI, this gluten-free recipe starts with red ripe organic tomatoes and is so thick, rich and full of zest that it won 3 blue ribbons at the Minnesota State Fair!

Friday, August 13, 3 – 6 p.m.

Awesome Family Skincare

>> **LOCAL LATHER** >> Minneapolis resident Joey (and his last name really is Awesome!) shows us how aloe vera, jojoba and tree tea oil combine to soothe skin after summer sun.

Sunday, August 15

Green Patch Nominations Deadline

>> **CO-OP INVOLVEMENT** >> Each year, the co-op is able to give \$2000-3000 to a pair of environmental non-profits via the Green Patch program. Visit www.lindenhills.coop/community/donations for more information and pick up a nomination form at our customer service desk.

Wednesday, August 18, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Chippewa Valley Cheese

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Now's the time to sample Chippewa Valley's spicy pepper jack or squeaky cheddar cheese curds. These Wisconsin small dairy farmers pasture graze their cattle to produce high-quality milk for their fabulous cheese.

Wednesday, August 18, 2 – 6 p.m.

Tastes from Valley to Bluff: The Featherstone Farm Cookbook

>> **CO-OP EVENT** >> Author Mi Ae Lipe will be on hand to sign The Featherstone Farm Cookbook (which she assembled on behalf of her favorite CSA farm) and discuss the benefits of eating locally. Mi Ae says the book has "inspired people to eat healthier and help further the cause of sustainable agriculture."

Wednesday, August 18, Time TBA

Monthly Board Meeting

>> **CO-OP INVOLVEMENT** >> Board meetings are held the third Wednesday each month and any co-op member is welcome to attend. Usually, a light meal is served. If you plan to attend, please let us know two-three days in advance. Call 612-279-2450 or email board@lindenhills.coop to reserve your seat (and plate!).

Thursday, August 19, 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Linden Hills Live

>> **COMMUNITY EVENT** >> Enjoy music and conversation with your neighbors. Our deli will be selling vegetarian sandwiches & seasonal salads. Linden Hills Natural Home will extend their hours until 8 p.m.

Friday, August 20 – Sunday, August 22

Natural Home Sidewalk Sale

>> **CO-OP EVENT** >> Selected items from Linden Hills Natural Home will be on sale this weekend. PLEASE NOTE: Natural Home will not be having an all-out "moving sale" since most of our inventory will be coming with us to the new store at 3815 Sunnyside. Nevertheless, you're sure to find some good bargains among our sidewalk offerings this weekend.

Saturday, August 21, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Barsy's Almonds

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Ever tried a Naughtie? How about a Hottie? The whimsical names will catch your eye, but the outstanding flavor will keep you reaching for more. Jason Hendrycks and Barbara Spenader roast and season the almonds right here in Minneapolis using a labor-intensive process, but we think the results are worth the effort!

Wednesday, August 25, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sweet Cheeks Savory Simmers

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> St. Paul's Lori Karis serves up organic, vegan and gluten-free Savory Simmers soups today. Read more about this local legend—and her super-nutritious baby foods—on page 1.

Saturday, August 28, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Pasture Pride Cheese

>> **LOCAL FLAVOR** >> Located in the idyllic dairy country of Wisconsin's Driftless region, Pasture Pride crafts their cheese the old-fashioned way. Sample their unique baked Juusto or artisan varieties today.

Saturday, September 11, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Woofstock

>> **COMMUNITY EVENT** >> The neighborhood goes to the dogs for the day. Enjoy live entertainment, dog trick contests and demonstrations. There'll be plenty of pooches to pet!

Sunday, September 12, 12 – 2 p.m.

Parade to Sunnyside

>> **CO-OP EVENT** >> Join us—and the Jack Brass Jazz Band—as we honor Linden Hills Co-op's history and look forward to our future at the new Sunnyside location. See above for more information—and don't forget your Mardi Gras beads.

Wednesday, September 15, Time TBA

Monthly Board Meeting

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Tuesday, September 21, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Les Moulins Mahjoub M'hamsa

>> **DEMO** >> Mahjid Majhoub (of Tunisia!) is our honored guest today. As owner of Les Moulins Mahjoub, Mr. Mahjoub will be serving up his handrolled couscous, or "M'hamsa." While, admittedly, it's far from local, this handrolled Tunisian M'hamsa helps preserve a centuries-old foodway tradition. And, we think that's important—no matter where it's done!



**LINDEN HILLS
CO-OP**
GROCERY & DELI

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