

**FINDING YOUR SOUL MATE
MAY TAKE A LIFETIME,
FINDING A QUALITY JEWELER
SHOULD NOT.**

**MAIN STREET
JEWELERS**
"Your Hometown Jeweler"
Locally Owned & Operated

139 East Main Street, Stoughton, WI 53589 Ph. (608) 873-4566

Hawkwind LLC
"Where Nature and Human Beings
Meet in Passionate Conversation™"

*Let our artisanal mustards
and relish become part of
all your favorite recipes.*

- Each of our products are infused with the enchantment of the ecosystem we farm.
- Beautiful fusions of colors and flavors that are herbicide and pesticide free.
- Small family-owned alternative farm in the Baraboo bluffs.
- Nationwide shipping.

(608) 356-2926
www.hawkwindllc.com

Bavaria
SAUSAGE & CHEESE HAUS

Gift cards available!

Super Bowl Parties & Valentine's Day
We've got you covered!

Order online! Our website is safe and efficient.

Squeaky Fresh WI
Cheese Curds

Snacking Sausage
Sampler

Bratwurst Sampler

Milka Pralines of
Nuss-Nougat-creams

Milka chocolate bars
made for Diabetics

Dark Chocolate Truffle
Bar with Chocolate Filling

Bavaria Sausage, Inc.
6317 Nesbitt Road, Madison, WI 53719
(608) 271-1295, (800) 733-6695, Fax: (608) 845-6693
www.bavariasausage.com

Stoughton Spirits

Wine, Beer, and Liquor **BOTTLED PLEASURE**

- Fine Wine, Craft Beer, Liquor.
- Over 300 Craft and Import Beers.
- Specializing in Fine Wines with over 500 Wines.
- 300 Wines under \$15.

**Valentine's Day
Gifts!**

Look for Stoughton Spirits
965 North Page Street, Stoughton

(608) 873-0860 • www.bottledpleasure.com

A tale of two co-ops



YAHARA RIVER GROCERY CO-OP AND JUST LOCAL FOOD CO-OP

by Donna Forton and Henry Verden

Co-ops have been a fixture in larger cities for a long time. They fill the niche left by large grocery chains for organic, vegan, gluten-free, and artisanal products. Buying a membership also lowers your bill, usually by five or ten percent, and gives you a vote in the operation of the co-op.

Another plus is being able to buy supplements, cosmetics and personal care items, and cleaning supplies that are additive-free and earth friendly.

As awareness of the benefits of having a co-op close by has grown, co-ops have started making the move into smaller communities. We recently visited a co-op getting ready to open in Stoughton, Wisconsin, and toured another that's been around since 2003 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Yahara River Grocery Co-op

It's not much to look at right now. The usual debris from deconstruction sits in piles around the space waiting to be removed as



the building transitions from coffee house to co-op. But by March of 2008, it will look very different when the Yahara River Grocery Co-op opens its doors.

The idea for the co-op started when Main Street Market closed. Main Street was a small four-aisle store that was the source for many specialty and gourmet foods in Stoughton. YRGC General Manager Mike Markin explained, "When the market closed, Stoughton lost its small, friendly hometown store. Right off the bat, people said that we needed to get another store in town to fill that niche. In September of 2006 they started meeting and in April of 2007 they

held their kick-off party to start a membership drive."

Yahara River's philosophy is to use as many local products as possible. "We'll be 80% organic/natural, local and 20% traditional," explained Mike. "We conducted surveys and thought

carefully about what we heard from customers. There was a clear request for certain products so we'll have Miracle Whip, Cool Whip, Blue Bunny Yogurt, Tide, and some other national brands. The 20% traditional products are primarily for convenience and to service seniors and younger people."

Many of the local products Yahara River Grocery will carry are familiar to shoppers at other co-ops in the Madison area. Mike went on to say, "We'll carry sandwiches, soups, and

salads from Willy Street Co-op, breads from Nature's Bakery, Wild Peace baked goods, and Gotham Bagels out of Madison."

YRGC is making a concerted effort to serve customers with special dietary needs. One ten-foot section is comprised entirely of gluten-free products so that customers will not have to search through the entire store to locate gluten-free alternatives. Shortly after they open, an eight-foot sugar-free section will also be established. The meat section will carry some of





Two of the many fund-raisers for the Yahara River Grocery Co-op have included a hootenanny (ABOVE) and a pie sale (LEFT). (BELOW) Volunteers take down a wall as part of the demolition phase in the space that houses the co-op. Construction is now underway with the opening scheduled for March 1.



the more unusual selections such as bison, elk, venison, ostrich, and a small seafood section.

Bulk items will be another feature of the co-op. One hundred twenty bulk bins will carry flours, sugars, nuts, pastas, Equal Exchange fair-trade coffees, and more. Bulk items are a popular way for customers to offer good quality products at a lower cost because there's little or no packaging involved. That is also an environmental plus.

Produce will be a highlight of the co-op. "We're going to really concentrate on our organic produce," said Mike. "When people come, they're going to be impressed."

While YRGC will make an effort to use as many local producers as possible, not all those producers will be certified organic. Most of the time, however, they follow organic practices, they just can't spare the time, or the money, or both that the certification process requires.

Yahara River Grocery Co-op is located in an historic building right on Main Street in Stoughton. This means it will have limited parking immediately adjacent to the store. Mike, however, was quick to point out that the parking issue is being addressed as well, "If somebody has more than one bag, they will

get their bags carried out by a customer service person. We also have one handicapped parking space and a double length one with a ten-minute limit so customers can pull up right in front to load up. Local delivery will be available to seniors on Senior Citizen's day which will be Wednesdays."

Yahara River Grocery Co-op is still actively seeking members, requiring a one-time \$75 membership fee. "Many customers want to wait until after the co-op opens to get their memberships but the one-time fee will be most effective now in helping with the expenses we have getting the co-op open. We want to encourage people to join now. Please don't wait until the last minute," stressed Mike. "Co-op memberships support a resource that is truly part of the community."

Just Local Food Co-op Shoppers at the Just Local Food Co-op in Eau Claire select their fresh vegetables and fruits almost as soon as they are delivered by local producers through the large delivery door. "We are unique in that our suppliers and farmers deliver the freshest meats and produce available locally to us. We're truly a neighborhood store," says Aaron Ellringer, one of the ten worker-owners. Just

Local Food Co-op is also unique in that they operate a booth at the summer Eau Claire Farmers' Market selling milk, cheese, butter, water, and coffee. Even though the Farmers' Market is a "producers only" market, the Board of the Farmers' Market has allowed Just Local Food Co-op to sell at the market because of their unique business model.

About 90% of the items stocked are organic, including grains and canned fruits, vegetables and beans. Whole Grain Milling from southeastern Minnesota and also Great River Organic Milling Co. from Fountain City, Wisconsin provide organic grains as well. While it is not possible to grow most produce during the Wisconsin winters, everything offered in season is grown locally but is not necessarily organic. Locally grown meats such as buffalo/bison, and grass-fed beef and lamb are available year-round.

More exotic selections include spicy pestos alongside hickory-smoked trout spread, jalapeño hummus, and herbal-mixed sea salts. Across the aisle is an exciting array of micro-brewed beers and ales in returnable bottles. And for the chocoholic,

one-piece fruit-flavored chocolates are displayed in their golden papers, concocted a few blocks away.

For the shopper interested in alternatives to the chemicals often found in commercially prepared lotions, soaps, cleansers, and laundry soaps, Just Local Food stocks a variety of nonallergenic and herbal preparations.

The co-op is dedicated to people who care about the food they eat and

market. The owners are very enthusiastic about what they are offering the community and are committed to old-fashioned personal service. In fact, Just Local Food will deliver free of charge within a 25-mile radius. Over the 25-mile limit, they ask for a donation.

Just Local Food is a small co-op with a big commitment to local producers, organic and sustainable agriculture, and a cleaner environment.



• IF YOU GO •

Yahara River Grocery Co-op
 229 East Main Street
 Stoughton, WI 53589
 (608) 877-0831
www.yaharagrocery.coop

Just Local Food Co-op
 772 First Avenue.
 Eau Claire, WI 54703
 (715) 577-5564
www.justlocalfood.com

