

HIDDEN BEAN



Bakeshop



Producer OF THE *Month*

DECEMBER 2019



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer OF THE *Month*

by Jon Megas-Russell



Over recent months we have received feedback from shoppers that they would like us to offer more vegan baked goods. While we do offer a few items, such as our vegan carrot cake, a full line of products has been hard to source. Recently our Food Services manager, Dawn, stopped in at the Brattleboro Farmers' Market and recognized Kelsey at Hidden Bean Bakeshop from when she did her Shareholder volunteer hours in the commissary kitchen. Dawn tried a few different baked goods of Kelsey's that day and was immediately impressed. Over the past few weeks, Dawn has been working closely with Kelsey to determine which items would be a good fit at the Co-op. We are pleased that starting in December

we will offer many Hidden Bean Bakeshop products, from breads to cookies to brownies to whoopie pies—all featuring beans. All selections are gluten free and dairy free, many are vegan, and all contain less sugar than your average baked good.

Hidden Bean Bakeshop started at UMass Amherst as Kelsey was authoring her honors thesis for her Nutrition major. She proposed a unique topic: "A Study of the Properties and Acceptability of Beans in Baked Goods." She was inspired to try this angle of baking because of the great health benefits

of beans, and because preliminary research showed there was nothing truly being offered in our regional marketplace that encompassed this approach. Her proposal was accepted, and she undertook a lengthy process of researching, baking, and writing a baked goods recipe book, *The Hidden Bean Cookbook*, exclusively based on adding beans to classic favorite recipes. She walked all over campus handing out baked goods and asking fellow students and professors to fill out a survey after they tried a sample. The challenge of making delicious baked goods while using



beans as a major ingredient was a tremendous amount of work, but also quite a bit of fun. Through her thesis work, she nailed down some excellent recipes that were both tasty and healthier for people because they traded butter, flour and sugar for alternatives such as beans, seeds, and reduced amounts of sugar. The original goal was to increase the nutrition—not to make every recipe gluten free; however, since publishing the cookbook she has adapted her baked goods to be gluten free based on customer demand. The thesis project was a grand success, resulting in the Hidden Bean Cookbook ready for distribution.

After college she moved to Cambridge, MA and worked as a dietitian for a few years. She enjoyed her time in the suburbs of Boston, but realized she wasn't following

the right path to her dreams of living in the mountains, farming, and becoming a baker. So, she took a job and residency at Earth Sky Time in Manchester, VT, living on their farm and working at events and in their bakery. She thoroughly enjoyed her time on the farm and often taste-tested her own baked goods on many of the other folks who lived and worked there. She got rave reviews—and some constructive feedback—from all, even those folks who were not keen on vegan and gluten free baked goods. She realized after about a year and half that she wanted to break off on her own to see if she could make a living off of her baking. She had one friend in Brattleboro, so she took the leap and moved south to take on many different part-time jobs, including nutrition counseling and volunteering on farms such as Wild Carrot.

This summer she joined the Brattleboro Farmers' Market every Saturday. The Market was an amazing opportunity for her as she gained exposure and grew sales as the summer progressed. She stated that much of her success came from responding to customer feedback for vegan, gluten free and maple/honey-based baked goods. She also was a sub at the Dorset Farmers' Market this summer, participated in the Tuesday downtown Brattleboro Farmers' Market, and returned to Earth Sky Time a few times a month to sell treats at their summer concerts. All of these allowed her to make great connections and continue to gain new fans of her products.

Kelsey's philosophy is to use local, organic and non-GMO ingredients as much as possible as well as focusing on real ingredients and omitting



artificial ingredients. She obtains all of her black beans from Yoder Farm in Danby, VT, her ginger from Full Plate Farm, maple syrup from Bascom Maple Farms, honey from Trifolium Farms in Dorset, VT, eggs from Fair Winds Farm or fellow vendors at the Brattleboro Farmers' Market. She does purchase organic and fair trade cane sugar from as far as Brazil, but because of the carbon footprint she is shifting to maple and honey as often as possible. Other ingredients including white beans, coconut milk, cocoa powder, coconut flakes, sunflower seeds, gluten free oats, and buckwheat are organic but do come from out of state. She does spend more money on ingredients than the average bakery but is not interested in sacrificing quality simply for cost. She has been pleased with her innovations since her initial days working on her thesis and she notes that sunflower seeds are a diverse new ingredient to sub in

for flour that pairs well with beans. Whenever possible she is harvesting squash, blueberries, and other delicious local fruits and veggies for her recipes. She spent a lot of time at many farms this summer picking and processing ingredients that could be frozen and used throughout the winter.

Kelsey worked 7 days a week this summer, some days baking for 14 hours with only a break to deliver products. She loves her packed schedule (though she wouldn't mind more free time in the future) because she is beginning to see her baking becoming more and more successful, and she truly loves her work. Currently you can find Hidden Bean products here at the Brattleboro Food Co-op and at the Coffee House in Wilmington. Special orders have picked up a bit with orders from Connecticut and even her first ever wedding cake. During her deliveries she has been stopping in

to do tastings and discuss options with Dawn in Food Services. It was a treat to witness these conversations and taste her whoopie pies, cookies, and brownies. They are all excellent recipes and an extremely important addition to our product line in the Deli. There are even talks about a dairy free, gluten free honey cake that will be available by the slice.

What does the future hold for Kelsey and Hidden Bean Bakeshop? First is to upgrade her packaging and labelling to more effectively share her logo and unique attributes of her baked goods. Next she wants to expand her line at the Co-op by working closely with customers and Dawn in the Deli to deliver vegan baked goods of the highest quality that are in demand. Customer feedback and being flexible have been pivotal up to this point and she wants to continue to thrive in that capacity. She also wants to expand her special orders and distribution to other co-ops and small stores around the region. She has a long-term dream to acquire land in order to raise a family and grow large amounts of fruits and veggies that can be used directly in her baked goods. Fruits and veggies such as pumpkins, zucchini, and blueberries are high on the list of crops she would like to grow on her land. Lastly, on this land she wants to have a small farm stand that could supplement her income by selling her fruits, veggies and baked goods right at her farm.

Stop in and try Hidden Bean Bakeshop baked goods now! You can also meet Kelsey at the Co-op on Friday, December 13th from 4-7pm and on Friday, December 20th from 4-7pm.

