

# Producer <sup>OF THE</sup> *Month*

JANUARY 2023



Max, Sam, and Scotty



BRATTLEBORO  
FOOD CO-OP

DELI

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By Ruth Garbus



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DELI

The Brattleboro Food Co-op deli first opened in 1988, thirteen years after we first opened our doors. It has since grown into a full-service deli that includes a pizza oven, self-serve hot bar and salad bar, made-to-order smoothies and sandwiches, grab-and-go meals and snacks, cases filled with entrees and salads to suit any need or desire, meats and cheeses sliced to order, desserts, coffees, and one of the biggest production kitchens in Brattleboro—and there are more developments to come. Despite all the growth and expansion, one important thing has remained the same: everything is made from scratch, ranging from sauces and marinades to salads, casseroles, and baked goods. The stock in our soups is simmered for hours in a big silver cauldron, the eggplants have been sliced and grilled to tender perfection, and the muffins, scones, and cookies are baked fresh every day.

Our history is tangible in the recipes: Beth's Triple Fudge Brownies, Dano's Edamame Salad, and Wild Will's Pork Carnitas, to name a few. Some of those folks have moved away, some have passed away, and some are still here. A number of our top sellers are from the early days—I've heard it said that this place was built on Sesame Noodles ("snoodles" in kitchen lingo) and Thai Tofu, and those are still going strong. Recipes like Natural Chicken

Salad ("natty chicken"), Korean Spinach ("K-spin"), and others have been filling Brattleboro's bellies for over two decades. Max, one of our managers, talks about experiencing the department's history like rings in a tree, passing through the old and encountering the new every day he comes to work.

Dano is one of those who is still here. He's been gracing our Co-op with his warmth and genuine charm since 1993, and he's seen many ups and downs over the years. When asked to describe what it's like to work on the deli line, he says there are two levels. On one, there's the community. The staff and the shareholders feel like a family; there is so much love here these days. Morale is up; the newer, younger staff are caring and kind and carry so much hope. On the other hand, he said, with a gleam in his eye, professionally, it is organized chaos, as is the nature of the food service industry. The staff's mastery of what they do is evident in how easy they make it look. "Chaos rules, embrace it," is Dano's motto.

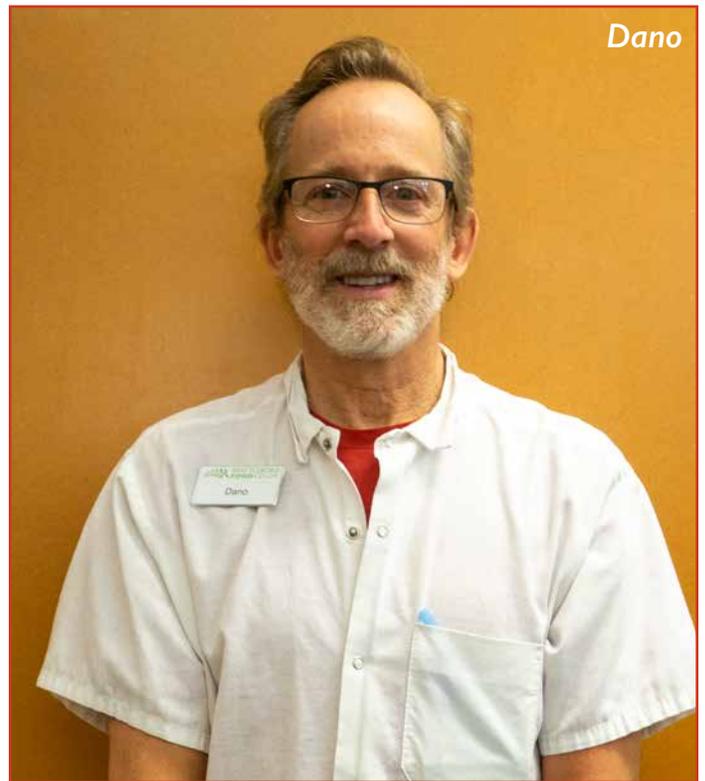
Andrew, the Head Cook in the kitchen, has a similar perspective on life in food service. "What's the word for when it's chaos, but it's never a surprise that it's chaos?" He has been with us for just over a year (though he was born and raised in Brattleboro). After working

in restaurants for over 27 years, none of the surprises surprise him anymore. He's worked all over the country, and though the BFC kitchen moves at a different pace than the restaurants of his past, it's still exhausting. Being on your feet and responding to urgent requests from all directions is a lot. But it's also rewarding. Happy customers eating food he's made is a great feeling.

## Power Trio

Scott Martin (you can call him Scotty, or Scooter if you're a friend) is the Food Services Manager, overseeing both the deli and the kitchen. He works with his assistant managers, Sam Salamone (Kitchen Manager) and Max Barksdale (Deli Manager), to guide the ship. As a trio, they are hilarious, energetic, youthful, and highly collaborative. We couldn't ask for a better group to lead us forward.

Scotty started in the BFC kitchen in 2011 as a cook, and except for one year, he's been here ever since. In 2015 he became the Assistant Culinary Kitchen Manager, and in November of 2021 he took over as the Food Services Manager. He grew up in this area, but his career has included a wide variety of kitchens. He's quiet, calm, kind, and always ready with a joke. And his longevity in the department has given him on-the-ground experience that is hugely valuable in his role as a leader.



Sam, too, has been here for a while: in May, she will have worked at the Co-op for nine years, during which she has chiefly occupied non-management roles, from the hot food station to baking, until becoming the Kitchen Manager about seven months ago. Her career in food service started at the tender age of thirteen, washing dishes in a restaurant. She also grew up right here, just up the street. In fact, the Co-op was the first store she ever went to by herself, at age six. She's a diligent, highly competent, and skilled presence in the kitchen, with a quietly eccentric flair. She fits in perfectly.

Max, our Deli Manager, is the baby of the bunch, at least in Co-op terms: he's been with us since June of 2021, after a long career in food service that took him all over the world. It seems the whole globe has been home to him at various points in his life, but he's originally from Germany. He's worked in this field for well over a decade, having fallen in love with the instant gratification that comes from feeding people delicious food. He's fast-moving,

fascinating, and dapper, with lots of humor, imagination, and heart. We are lucky to have him here.

### Changes

The management trio has been working on improving and streamlining processes in many areas. For example, all the platters in the deli cases are now squares or rectangles instead of the oval-shaped ones that had been used for years. They're more space efficient and make the lives of the deli clerks just a little bit easier. Also, hot sandwiches now take six minutes to make as opposed to fifteen. Some of this has to do with taking a deep dive into the nitty gritty, going through all the details of how a sandwich is actually assembled and making adjustments, or looking at the exact number of certain sandwiches that are ordered on average in a week and preparing them in advance as much as possible. As it's been said, work smarter, not harder.

New equipment, like the Turbo Chef Oven, which was purchased well over a year ago, also made a big impact on the hot sandwich process.

It's easy to assume a change like this would simply be a matter of buying the new and replacing the old. But behind the scenes was three months of Max learning how to use it (without being provided with an owner's manual), and a redesign of the deli's process. Making improvements takes an investment not only of money, but also of time and energy. With the overall hustle and bustle—and staff-shortages that have become more acute in the COVID-19 era—it's a real challenge to move beyond the daily grind.

In the near future, we'll be adding an espresso machine. Soon creamy cappuccinos and smooth Americanos will be on offer, all made with high-quality beans and a variety of milks for you to choose from. Getting it up and running will require electrical work, a bit of plumbing, oodles of training, and an additional employee, but it's coming soon!

Another change that might seem simple on the surface but is actually very complex is signage. The labels on the items in the case have fulfilled their purpose well, but for a variety



of reasons they're in need of an upgrade. Scott, Max, and Sam have been working hard with the BFC Graphics department to clearly list all the ingredients of every deli item, and to design symbols for every dietary category. It's a project that's been over a year in the making. The hope is to help customers navigate the complicated waters of food allergies, and lighten the burden on the deli staff.

Last but not least, what about the sushi? Pangaea Sushi is a small, woman-owned business based in Western Mass, and we couldn't be happier to have them on board. The sushi is made on-site in our kitchen by one of the Pangaea team, named Po—essentially, Pangaea rents space in our kitchen to make the sushi, and we share the profit, an arrangement they also have at other area co-ops. Though not technically a Co-op employee, Po has been a gem in our staff community, with his openness and calm enthusiasm. The warmth of his relationship to our little BFC village was illustrated by his generous offering of a large spread of California rolls and other delights to our pre-Thanksgiving holiday staff lunch

without any prompting besides the desire to give us this wonderful gift.

### Local

If you're at all familiar with the BFC, you'll know that we put a lot of emphasis on local. We carry a lot more local products throughout all the departments than conventionally-owned markets; we keep things as close to home as possible. For the deli and kitchen, local means a lot of things. For one, they try to use as much local produce as they can. In particular, they partner with Picadilly Farm during the growing season. It also means using local vendors for many of the baked goods and other specialties we carry. For example, Hidden Bean Bakery and Saxy Chef are both local businesses that we have strong relationships with.

We ourselves are also a big local producer. In fact, sales of BFC-made items amounted to just over \$1.8 million last fiscal year. Max made the point that our commissary is a production kitchen of great significance in our area. Scotty added that, for a kitchen of our size, making this quantity of food, it's unusual enough that we make things from scratch,

but what's even more remarkable is the variety of ingredients we use. It's extremely rare to see such a range of recipes, incorporating such a large assortment of veggies, meats, herbs, oils, spices, nuts, and cheeses.



The entire deli and kitchen shut down when the pandemic hit. The staff who wanted to brave it out were temporarily dispersed to other departments. It took a while, but as Dano said, the deli and kitchen have risen like a phoenix from the ashes. He has experienced the embrace of this community like never before. Come visit our deli with a renewed appreciation for this unique vibrant part of our cooperative, where our coworkers create and serve delicious, healthy food with kindness, in a loving community atmosphere. Welcome, and enjoy!



**BFC Deli will offer samples of their delicious food every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday for the whole month of January!**

**The BFC Deli is always looking for qualified help. Come join this dynamic team! View available jobs and apply on our website at [BFC.coop/jobs](http://BFC.coop/jobs)**