

# CO-OP Digest

July/August 2011

North Country Food Cooperative

*For the community. By the community.*

## Chicken-Keeping Nothing to Cluck At

by Melissa Hart



The rising cost of fuel should force us to take a hard look at our food supply and how vulnerable it is to unstable prices. The shift in prices and availability of fuel is likely to hit places harder where discretionary income is more limited, particularly in rural regions such as ours.

These pressing problems create opportunities to change our attitudes toward the food we eat and where it comes from. As backyard gardens have grown in popularity, so has a resurgence of hobbyists keeping a small number of hens to supply a family with eggs and the entertainment that pet chickens provide.

This new movement is being adopted by cities across the country. In Rochester, for example, residents who want to keep chickens pay \$25 for a license which, in the city limits, is limited to no roosters and no commercial breeding. Coops must be kept 25 feet away from houses and must provide a minimum of four square feet of room per bird. The coop set-up must be inspected before adding chickens, to make sure it provides enough space and healthy conditions

for the birds.

Sensible policies such as this would not be difficult to enact in Plattsburgh. And while I myself live out in the country, where I keep six birds in a coop and enclosed run, I believe through thoughtful, well-crafted policy, chickens can be introduced to urban areas with minimal impact. Everyone should have the right to make decisions that aim to strengthen food security and I urge city residents to consider a change to ordinances that prohibit pet chickens.

I am part of a group here in Plattsburgh advocating for chicken-keeping. We have a Facebook page set up, where users can post photos and swap stories. We're also spearheading a letter-writing campaign to area media outlets. Information can be found here: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Plattsburgh-Chickens/176924392356860> or email me: [hart.melissa@rocketmail.com](mailto:hart.melissa@rocketmail.com).

## Butter is Better than Ever

by Seth DeFayette



During my childhood in our family household, we lived under the discreet tyranny of margarine. My favorite snack: a piece of toast with margarine and cinnamon. It melted well and it tasted

like butter (well, I didn't know what real butter tasted like back then). Then one day in the 1990s, someone, somewhere, discovered that the transfats in margarine are actually totally non-essential and actually directly cause heart disease by raising your LDL (bad) cholesterol. Margarine was no longer on the menu, even though it was on the menu for a long time and who knows what permanent damage it has done. It is simply too late, and life must go on.

During the early 2000s, something weird came to our rescue: SmartBalance. A blend of olive oil and other things discovered and produced in a lab somewhere, it tasted okay but spread terribly. And you couldn't let it sit out of the fridge for long or it would become an oily, artificial puddle. I can believe it was not butter.

Then one day, late in the 2000s, we rediscovered the thing that was being substituted for all this time: pure, unadulterated butter! I think it was the Kerrygold Irish butter that I first tried and JESUM CROW(!) it actually tasted really, really good. You could leave it outside the fridge in a little butter dish by the stove, and scoop a big chunk to steam your vegetables in, fry your eggs in, or eat straight with a spoon if desired.

Organic Valley Butter is alright, but is more processed (more pasteurized) than other butters, and therefore appears to have lost some of its taste. At the moment in the Co-Op, Evan's Farmhouse butter is available. This is a butter made from low-temperature pasteurized milk. I haven't tried it yet, but I'm excited to. Ghee is an Indian clarified-butter that is delicious and designed to stay solid in a warmer climate such as India. Vermont Cultured Butter is a good one too, and so are the French butters (Pamplie and Celles sur Belle) that I discovered at the Co-Op

*Disclaimer: The Co-op Digest is written by individual volunteers. Opinions expressed herein are those of each author.*

across the lake (I'm not disloyal to our Co-Op, I swear I only go over there five times a year – and only then for butter [and wine]).



[PHOTO ABOVE: Isabelle teaching me how to make butter in a laboratoire in France]

Besides the taste, real butter has other benefits. The fat is saturated, which is a source of long-term energy for your body (rather than short-term carbs), and also boosts healthy HDL cholesterol. It also contains a very small amount of lactose, so lactose-intolerant individuals are able to eat a moderate amount with no problem. It also provides satiety (satisfying hunger), and adding it to vegetables will help to leave you feeling full.

Like everything else in food, what is natural and traditional usually wins in the long run. Butter is permanently back on the menu.

## July/August Film Nights: Happy 45th, Star Trek

by Andy MacDougall



Happy 45th, STAR TREK!

STAR TREK is 45 this year, and we're celebrating with 16mm (film) surprises on the evening of Saturday, July 30th at 7 p.m., upstairs here at the Co-op. Come one, come all!

So what makes the occasion so important?

I recently discussed TOS (the original series) with my friend John who, having rediscovered it on remastered DVD, bemoaned the depiction of Starfleet brass as incompetent or worse. He insists that presenting them as everything from politically ignorant to dangerously self-serving detracts from the series, but I respectfully disagree and here's why.

One of TOS's most captivating virtues is how prophetic it was, especially in being chillingly reflective of current events, indeed, not in a good way. Guess what, Sillyvization is collapsing, due in part to society's movers & shakers often behaving like ineffectual Starfleet pencil-pushers, rogue starship commanders, etc., as depicted in TOS. Clearly a visionary genius, creator Gene Roddenberry was perhaps attempting to exorcise his own demons by predicting today's world in this fashion. Despite being a very flawed persona in ways that most Trekkies/Trekkers are in denial about, you've gotta hand it to Roddenberry for painting a unique portrait whose sense of urgency is unflagging to this day....the very backbone of TOS timelessness. Recall the landmark episode "The Deadly Years," in which Captain Kirk and other principle characters age rapidly following exposure to a mysterious alien shock to their collective system. Kirk is forced to relinquish command to one Commodore Stocker, who proves to be an inexperienced boob, placing the Enterprise in a pickle with the Romulans through sheer ignorance of their military code of conduct.

John made a big deal about the alleged impossibility of Cmdr. Stocker's cluelessness about the Romulans; after all, he's a high-ranking Starfleet officer! And yet, ironically, John himself had previously cited Ronald Reagan's (thankfully temporary) cluelessness about the dangers of nuclear weapons. Early in his presidency, without any knowledge of radioactive fallout, Reagan thought nukes were just bigger bombs than usual. Not to digress, but anti-nuke activist Dr. Helen Caldicott related the personal experience of having literally held Reagan's hand through his tearful rude awakening to the ghastly truth about nuclear weapons.

Anyway, is a high-ranking Starfleet officer ignorant of Romulan war protocol any less credible than the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES being ignorant of the most crucial aspect of potential nuclear war? I mean, c'mon, the freakin' president?! What's the difference between Dr. Caldicott's account and Cmdr. Stocker pleading "What am I going to do? Someone please tell me what to do!" before Kirk finally bounds back onto the bridge, rejuvenated, in the nick of time? Easy. The world could've gotten by

without Kirk saving the day in that episode. But could the world have gotten by without President Reagan's education about nuclear weapons? Need I say more? So yes, let's celebrate STAR TREK's 45th birthday! Let's celebrate STAR TREK every day! Hope to see everyone on July 30th!

As for August's token movie night, we'll have more all-time classic television to revisit in the 16mm format, but in a completely different vein this time. Get set for a celebration of groundbreaking vintage TV comedy, with "The Honeymooners," "I Love Lucy" and other legendary hoots, plus a surprise gem sadly lost in the pop culture shuffle 50 years ago.

We hope to see you all here on Saturday, August 27, at 7 p.m. for that knee-slapping gig.

## What's the deal with the Kombucha Controversy?

by Adam DeFayette



In short, Kombucha is a fermented or "cultured" tea beverage. And frankly it is delicious: sweet, carbonated, sour, and refreshing; makes me feel like a million bucks. Doesn't sound too controversial, right? Oh, but it is. About a year ago almost all kombucha drinks were temporarily pulled from the shelves of food markets nationwide. This was purportedly due to the substantial alcohol content (+.5% = alcoholic beverage, according to the Feds) discovered upon testing. As this is a fermented beverage some amount of alcohol is a natural byproduct of production. On average, it is a miniscule amount because the bacterial component of a kombucha culture ferments the alcohols produced by the yeast into acetic acid (the main component in vinegar). This increases the acidity while limiting the alcoholic content of kombucha. One would think that the major producers of Kombucha would have this process down to a science, BUT, therein lays my point. I have been home brewing kombucha for about 2 years now. My results are all over the map. There are many, many variables that affect the final product. We're dealing with a living thing here, after all. It's comforting in its way: although ancient traditions are commodified, they resist our control.