A Monthly Newsletter of the East End Food Co-op The Go-operator Volume 17: Issue 7 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

At Your Store

WHAT'S NEW AT YOUR CO-OP?

July Co-op Advantage Sales begin Wednesday, July 5.

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAYS

Sundays: July 16 and August 13 Shop 8 am - 9 pm

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING All members are welcome.

Check the front entrance for dates and times

THE CO-OPERATOR DEADLINE

July 1 for the August 2006 Issue All submissions and ads are due.

For more information, call Member Services at 412.242.3598.

JOIN US FOR A CO-OP ORIENTATION <u>NIGHT</u>

Learn the secrets every member wants to know EVERY TUESDAY — 7pm Customer Service desk

Sign up or call 412.242.3598

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Call For artists...

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East End Food Co-op

7516 Meade Street Pittsburgh, PA 15208 412-242-3598 www.eastendfood.coop

Fresh Eggs from the Silver Wheel Farm

by Jesse Sharrard

A dozen eggs from Silver Wheel Farm will come in varied hues: pale brown, dark brown with chocolate speckles, and even green. That's because Ben Shaevitz and Lori Sands raise 25 different breeds of chicken. Crack one of their farm-fresh eggs into a saucer, and you'll notice a few more differences from a factory egg. A Silver Wheel egg's white sits higher and its yolk is both fuller and more vibrant than a supermarket's egg; most supermarket eggs are warehoused for 4-6 weeks before they make it to the shelf. The date the Silver Wheel eggs are collected is stamped on the carton, and it's within a couple weeks of when you buy them. "An egg lasts three months," explains Lori, "but fresher is better." Proof of that statement is as easy as comparing a fried egg of each type; the Silver Wheel egg tastes fuller-bodied and richer than the mass-produced alternative.

Other factors may have an impact on the egg's taste, especially the environment in which it is produced. The chickens at Silver Wheel eat a hormone-free, organic diet. Ben, who has primary responsibility over the farm's poultry, takes great care to ensure that the birds don't endure unnecessary stress. The chicks spend their first two months in a shed while they grow feathers. Once they're strong enough, he releases them into a tent where they can stay grouped together for comfort and explore the outside at their own pace. It's a better method than just putting them out in a field, because such a sharp change from what they've known would disturb them. "They'd survive just fine," says Ben, "but they wouldn't be happy, and there's no reason to subject them to that kind of stress."

Ben changes the confines of the chickens' pen every few weeks so that they'll have grass to forage. "They can get 30% of their diet from grass and insects," says Ben. "It's not everything, but it saves some money on feed and gives them a more varied diet."

Additionally, there is about one rooster for every five hens in the flock. "It's a more natural way for the birds to live," says Ben. "It seems to keep them happy. Plus, all of our eggs are fertilized," an intangible as far as the taste is concerned, but a factor that some believe leads to a better egg. "None of the factory farm eggs are fertilized," Ben explains, "but most of the smaller operations do it this way." It's part of trying to let the chickens lead a natural life.

Sometimes, hens will get broody and protest by clucking and pecking when Ben tries to collect their eggs. He capitalizes on these behaviors by isolating those hens with a rooster and encouraging them to sit. If his plan works, Ben won't have to rely on hatcheries and will be able to farm even more sustainably by raising chicks from his own flock.

The hens begin laying at around 4-6 months old and will lay for the rest of their lives, though they reach their egg-laying peak at around 12-18 months. Most largescale operations convert hens above two



Inside the henhouse



Feedina time

years of age into pet food because the hens are no longer able to keep up with the quota, but Ben and Lori let hens live out their lifespan, giving the eldest hens to their Amish neighbors for soup when the end is clearly near. Otherwise, Silver Wheel's flock need not live in fear of the chopping block—especially since Ben and Lori are vegetarians. Farming animals does not necessarily mean cruelty, as Silver Wheel undoubtedly proves.

The Silver Wheel Farm —

Ben Shaevitz and Lori Sands 141 Porter Rd. Harrisville, PA 16038 (724) 735-4054 www.silverwheelfarm.com

Produce Available —

At the East End Food Co-op or by subscription to their Community Supported Agriculture Group (CSA).

In addition to eggs —

Arugula, Asian greens, basil, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, kale, leeks, mustard greens, onions, potatoes, radicchio, spinach, tomatoes, turnips, winter squashes, zucchini, and more.

DON'T MISS MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY — JULY 16

MEMBERS RECEIVE 10% OFF SHELF PRICE ALL DAY! SAMPLES AND TASTINGS 8AM TO 4PM

All members are welcome to attend the Co-op Board Meetings. Check the bulletin board in the front vestibule for dates and times.



Pittsburgh, PA 15208 7516 Meade Street East End Food Co-operative

