

# More than food

YAHARA RIVER  
GROCERY COOPERATIVE  
229 East Main Street • Stoughton, WI  
608-877-0947 • [www.yaharagrocery.coop](http://www.yaharagrocery.coop)



Summer 2008

## Growing and changing

Times have changed since Yahara River Grocery Cooperative opened. The economy has taken a downward turn, gas prices are sky-high, and YRGC is experiencing growing pains.

Prices were higher than we expected for our grocery inventory, and we are working on this and other things:

- Negotiating lower prices and better sale items with our grocery vendors. We have lowered prices by 20% on conventional items and 15% on health and beauty aids and general merchandise.
- Working with grocery suppliers to get special, behind-the-scene sale items. That's how we are able to offer our weekly Mega sale items.
- Cutting operational expenses wherever possible.
- Supporting local farmers while providing unique products. We work with 40 local vendors and have more than 550 local items to choose from, including our Locavore Sandwich made from local ingredients.
- Listening to our focus groups. Members want to see more conventional items in the store so we will be increasing the ratio of conventional to organic items.

## STORE HOURS

Open daily 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Call 608-877-0947 to place a grocery order and for delivery.

## Participate in your investment

While in the planning stages for Yahara River Grocery Cooperative, the community interest and support for the store was strong. It is vital to have options for people to shop in Stoughton, and YRGC offers a great community-supported store that in turn supports the community.

Many dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers put careful thought and planning into developing a strong and realistic business plan for a grocery store of this size.

### Co-op success depends on members

We have more than 900 members, which is fantastic, but right now our sales are about half of the projected amount in our business plan. About one-half of our members are shopping once a week, averaging \$20 to \$25. If we could increase to at least 75% of our members shopping once a week and spending \$30 to \$40, we could meet our sales goal and cover operating expenses.

The reality is that not all of us can afford to shop entirely at one store; we have to go where the deals work for us. If we can average 675 members shopping each week, however, YRGC will be here to serve the community for a long time!

We now ask you, YRGC members, to step up to help make this store a success. This grocery cooperative was born from community need, and it needs community participation to keep it alive.

If you are already a regular shopper, we thank you for your past and continued support. We need more members, however, to visit and support the store.

## Ways to participate

Please consider some of the following ways you can help Stoughton retain a community-owned store:

- Commit to shopping at least weekly at YRGC. We don't expect you to spend 100% of your food budget at the co-op, but we could meet store sales projections and cover operating costs if you would spend an average of \$30 to \$40 a week with us.
- Invest in YRGC. Community investment money helps finance operations. It allows the co-op to generate money at less cost than borrowing from commercial lenders. Certificates of Investment are issued for \$500 or more for 3 to 5 years. A simple interest rate of 3% is paid annually. Investment forms are available at the store or at [www.yaharagrocery.coop](http://www.yaharagrocery.coop).
- Tell your friends why you shop at the co-op. Ask them to become members. Our goal is to have 1,000 members by fall.
- Volunteer to work in the store. This will help manage operational expenses, since labor is one of the largest expenses incurred. See "Call for volunteers" article on page 2.
- Consider buying yourself a YRGC gift card. Several members do this for shopping convenience and to budget their monthly spending. Purchasing a monthly gift card helps the co-op's cash flow.

As a member, we always want to hear what you have to say! Talk to the store's management, use the suggestion box at the store or e-mail suggestions to [info@yaharagrocery.coop](mailto:info@yaharagrocery.coop).

## Price isn't everything... but what's the difference?

Warren Kmiec, YRGC Treasurer, did an informal price comparison June 9 of some of his basic food purchases. He found that YRGC's prices were right in line with other cooperative's (Willy Street) and close to Jenifer Street Market (similar to Main Street Market).

Keep in mind when looking at the following chart that Warren did not compare green onions to green onions. YRGC and Willy Street produce is organic while Jenifer Street Market's is not.

Warren says, "Better price is not my only criteria for making choices. I like knowing my purchases support our local economy when I shop at the co-op." He also likes the warm, friendly feeling at YRGC, the helpful staff, and that he saves on time and gas.

Product	YRGC	Willy Street	Jenifer Street
Green onions	\$1.39*	\$1.98*	\$1.40
Green leaf lettuce	\$1.99*	\$2.12*	\$1.39
Red pepper	\$4.19*	\$5.69*	\$6.39
Tomatoes	\$3.29*	\$3.39*	\$2.49
Cheerios – 8.9 oz	\$4.74	\$4.49	\$4.49
Can of sweet corn	\$1.42	\$1.89	\$0.85
Bush Baked Beans	\$1.42	\$1.19	\$1.19
Hienz Ketchup – 14 oz	\$1.89	\$1.49	\$1.49
Newman's Salsa – 11 oz	\$3.19	\$2.65	\$1.89
Newman's Tomato Sauce	\$4.29	\$3.75	\$2.59
Milk 2% – 1/2 gal	\$2.19	\$1.69	\$1.99
Butter – 1 lb	\$2.99	\$2.55	\$3.65
Cottage cheese – 12 oz	\$2.09	\$1.49	\$1.59
Eggs – large	\$1.89	\$2.35	\$1.36
KW Knudson Cranberry	\$3.99	\$3.39	\$4.99
<b>Total shopping cost</b>	<b>\$40.96</b>	<b>\$40.11</b>	<b>\$37.75</b>

\*Organic item

**difference difference**  
**\$ .85 \$3.21**

## Discount, puppet show, cooking demo and music at July 3 Member Appreciation Day

The first Thursday of each month is Member Appreciation Day at the Yahara River Grocery Cooperative. As a member, you receive an additional 5% off purchases (except alcohol and sale items) that day for a total member discount of 10%.

For July 3 Member Appreciation Day, we've planned the following activities to enhance your co-op shopping experience:

- 11 AM** Children's entertainer, Reid Miller, performs with Dusty the Dragon
- 11 AM–1 PM** Free Blue Marble chocolate milk for children
- 6–8 PM** Cooking demo (*Fresh Summer Bruchetta*) and Hootenanny

As always, everyone is welcome to shop at YRGC! Do you have friends or neighbors who aren't members? Tell them they can be members for a day and receive 5% off their purchases July 3.

## Call for volunteers

Your grocery has many needs for volunteers. Make new friends and have fun while participating in the cooperative experience. We can use you to:

- **Help in the store.** We need volunteers to work on a variety of tasks, including stocking and cleaning shelves, carrying out groceries for customers and helping customers in the store. If you can commit to working 3 hours each week, you will receive an additional 5% off your purchases as a thank you. Please contact General Manager Mike Markin at 877-0947 or e-mail volunteer@yaharagrocery.coop.
- **Serve on a committee.** The YRGC Board of Directors is a volunteer group dedicated to keeping this store alive! We have several committees that could use your great ideas, input and hands-on work. You can choose from marketing, research, finance, fundraising, membership, senior communications, product buyers, and some other temporary committees that work on special events. Please contact YRGC President Myra Hajny at 873-8473 or e-mail info@yaharagrocery.coop.

## More than food

is published by the Yahara River Grocery Cooperative, 229 East Main Street, Stoughton, WI 53589.

**GENERAL MANAGER**  
Mike Markin

### YRGC BOARD OFFICERS

Myra Hajny, President  
Norma Sampson, Vice President  
Warren Kmiec, Treasurer  
Deb Piper, Secretary  
Marlene Widra, Member-at-Large  
Homer Howard, Senior Liaison

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Yahara River Grocery Cooperative needs the support of all of its members to operate. My hope is that you joined the co-op because you believe in the principles of a cooperative, that you want healthy choices, that quality is important to you, that you are committed to supporting the local economy, and that you are willing to do what you can to make the co-op a success.

As YRGC finds its niche in Stoughton, you can help by shopping at the store on a regular basis. Stop by often to see what's new. Talk to the staff and use the suggestion box near the front of the store to submit ideas you think would help business. Tell your friends to do the same.

If you've been in Stoughton for any length of time, you've seen businesses come and go. Don't let YRGC go! Please protect your investment by shopping, volunteering and promoting the store.

**Myra Hajny, YRGC President**

*Cost of groceries in Madison: \$38*  
*Cost of gas to drive: \$4 to \$8*  
*Hours of your life: 2*

*Cost of groceries at YRGC: \$41*  
*Cost of gas to drive: \$1*  
*Minutes of your life: 15*

*Supporting your local farmers,  
families and community?*

**Priceless.**

## Whither the Main Street Market?

Many YRGC members can remember the disappointment of losing Main Street Market as a shopping option in Stoughton. Remember, Mayor Johnson's public meeting to discuss this issue? In fact, the desire to replace Main Street Market motivated a lot of support for YRGC.

Recent focus groups with YRGC members reminded us that the co-op takes a different slant on food choices, and that may have taken some shoppers by surprise. There's more emphasis on organic and locally-produced items than was true at Main Street.

Has this prevented you from shopping at YRGC? We want your input to create a product mix that meets your needs. Changes are underway to diversify the food available for your daily needs to include some of the more familiar standard brands. Come in to check out the changes, and let us know what you think. If you like what we're doing, be sure to let us know that, too.

## Be a locavore: Eat local food

You can call yourself a locavore if you cook and eat foods grown or produced locally whenever possible.

"The co-op is now making a Locavore Sandwich," says Mike Markin, general manager. You can find the Locavore sandwich – made with local bread, cheese, meat, mustard or pesto and spinach or lettuce – in the deli case.

"At the YRGC we're carrying more than 550 local products," Markin adds. "We also feature a local producer every month."

Buying local supports local agriculture and value added production, plus you know where your food dollars are going. Also, buying local cuts down on food dollars spent on transportation costs. Three-quarters of all our food supply is shipped by truck, and then travels an average distance of 1,500 miles to reach our grocery cart.

## Community through and through

One of the goals of the Yahara River Grocery Cooperative is to have a positive impact on Stoughton. We want to serve our community in addition to being a community-owned store.

Since opening March 1, YRGC has promoted the greater good as follows:

- Initiated SNAP or Stoughton Nonprofit Assistance Program. When you round up your purchase to the next dollar amount (or SNAP up) the difference goes to SNAP, and the co-op donates the funds to area organizations dedicated to improving our community's healthful living and environment. March SNAP funds (\$430) were donated to Stoughton Youth Center, April SNAP funds (\$274) to Stoughton Food Pantry and May's funds (\$258) to "Take Stock in Stoughton" fundraising campaign. The June SNAP round-up money will go to the Stoughton Public Library's Summer Youth Reading Program and July to Shalom Holistic Health Services.
- Created "First Saturdays" in cooperation with other Stoughton businesses to increase foot traffic in downtown. Coordinated volunteers from Stoughton Youth Center to help with activities at participating businesses.
- Donated food weekly to the Stoughton Food Pantry.
- Promoted a raffle for the "Take Stock in Stoughton" fundraising campaign to raise matching funds for the Preserve America \$250,000 grant. (Raffle tickets are on sale at the co-op and many other businesses until July 31.)
- Gave local musicians an opportunity to play and music lovers the opportunity to enjoy hootenannies. Currently, these musical jam sessions are from 6 to 7 p.m. every Thursday at the store.
- Supplied fruit and other food for the MS Walk and Syttende Mai Run/Walk.
- Installed a bike rack in front of store that led to a plan for Stoughton to incorporate bike parking throughout downtown.
- Provided free deliveries to Senior and homebound members.
- Planned and held an Earth Day event for pre-schoolers.
- Participated in the national Fair Trade Coffee Break.
- Hosted an event with a Nicaraguan coffee grower.
- Served lunch at the Stoughton Area Senior Center.
- Displayed artwork by local artists including a mural designed and painted by the Stoughton Youth Center. (YRGC will showcase art by the Stoughton Youth Center in July and Skaalen Home residents in August.)

## Raffle for "Preserve America" grant

Stoughton has been honored as a "Preserve America" destination and is now raising funds for a matching federal grant! The \$250,000 matching grant will be used to protect Stoughton's cultural and natural heritage.

As part of the "Take Stock in Stoughton" fundraising effort, the Yahara River Grocery Coop has joined with many area businesses to create a great gift package for a raffle drawing. Tickets are \$5 each or six for \$25 and are available at the YRGC, McGlynn Pharmacy, Thrifty White Drug, Catfish River Antiques, the Barber Shop, Ozee Cars, and the Chamber of Commerce.

The lucky winner will receive a fabulous package worth more than \$600. The drawing will be held July 31 at the Yahara River Grocery Coop. Buy your ticket today, your purchase will help Stoughton promote all that it has to offer!

## Summer potluck picnic and membership meeting set for July 13 in the park

All members and their families are invited to spend an afternoon celebrating the opening and existence of Yahara River Grocery Cooperative. Our first summer potluck picnic and membership meeting is set for noon to 3 p.m., Sunday, July 13, at Norse Park (the corner of North Page Street and Kriedeman Drive) in Stoughton.

Please bring a dish to pass. YRGC will provide lemonade, water and table service.

The event will include children's activities and family fun—volleyball and maybe even a softball game—as well as an opportunity to visit with other co-op members. Besides all the fun, we'll hold a short membership meeting at 1:30 p.m. and give you an opportunity to speak with General Manager Mike Markin and members of the YRGC Board of Directors.

Please join us to catch up with old friends, meet new ones, and discuss the successes and challenges that we've encountered since we opened March 1, and, more importantly, to plan future changes we can make to serve you and the community better.

## Get ready for September 5–15 challenges: Eat Local America and Wisconsin Eat Local

This summer, Yahara River Grocery Cooperative encourages you to eat locally. YRGC is promoting two challenges, so you can choose in which level to participate. The Wisconsin Eat Local Challenge is to spend 10% of your food budget on local food. For those up for the greater challenge, the Eat Local America Challenge asks you to devote 80% of your diet (four of every five ingredients) to local foods.

Both challenges are September 5 to 15, and YRGC is sponsoring them to help you learn about the healthful, economical and environmental benefits of eating locally.

### Tips for taking the challenge

Changing your diet can be difficult as well as rewarding. YRGC offers these tips for successfully reaching the Eat Local Challenge goal of your choice:

- **Linger and learn.** Don't just dive into the challenge on Day 1. Allow extra time at your next visit to YRGC to discover which foods are local. Add up what you are spending on local food now.

- **Start early.** Before the challenge, begin incorporating more local foods into your diet as a way to begin making it more of a habit to buy local.
- **Visit a farm or a farmers' market.** Take your family on a road trip to an area farm. (Call ahead to make sure it's okay.) Check our web site [www.yaharagrocery.coop](http://www.yaharagrocery.coop) for the names of our local producers of the month.
- **Plan out meals for the challenge.** While it may feel a bit daunting to plan each meal weeks in advance, developing these plans can be a fun learning experience and makes participating in the challenge that much easier once the challenge begins.

When it comes to local, you can't be much more local than Yahara River Grocery Cooperative. Besides being a locally-owned business that strengthens the local economy, YRGC supports local farmers, producers, and other businesses. Fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, chicken and beef all come to your co-op from just miles away.

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*If every US Citizen ate just ONE MEAL A WEEK (any meal) composed of locally or organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 MILLION BARRELS OF OIL every week. That's not gallons, but barrels. Small changes in buying habits can make big differences. Becoming a less-dependent nation may just need to start with a good breakfast.*

Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, A Year of Food Life*

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Participate in your investment.  
Shop weekly at *your* grocery!