

Institutional Memory at the Seasoned Spoon

**Includes:
Research Report
Manual**

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and Jaime Sidler**

Seasoned Spoon Cafe

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Trent Centre for Community-Based Education**

Department: Environmental and Resource Studies

Course Code: ERST 334H

Date of Project Completion: December 2008

Project ID: 930

Call Number:

Institutional Memory at The Seasoned Spoon: Reference Appendix

A Trent Centre for Community Based Education Project for the Seasoned Spoon Café

December 12, 2008

Course: CAST 334H Canadian Food Systems

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Supervisors: Sylvia Dick – Seasoned Spoon

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1. Authors Note

It is our intention as the authors of this manual that those who read this will be able to see the amazing, and unique operations and people that we see in the running of The Seasoned Spoon Café. Furthermore, it will provide information for interested parties, and will afford them a glimpse into the organization and how it is viewed by its employees, members, board of directors and coordinators. Essentially, what we chose to present here is a textual picture of a day in the life of The Seasoned Spoon which represents our very best efforts to incorporate as many interpretations of this idea as possible. Our endeavour is to show what it is that we, as collaborators on this project see happening at The Seasoned Spoon: cultivation of a hope for the future of healthy, accessible, and local food in a place where education and experience are such key factors for the paths we all chose from here. Thank you and enjoy!

2. Introduction

The Seasoned Spoon Café is an alternative food source located above Champlain's Great Hall at Trent University. You might be asking 'what constitutes an alternative food?' The answer in this context is food that is grown in a sustainable fashion; has low environmental impact, is socially just, and provides adequate economic reimbursement for growers. However, the word 'alternative' suggests that it presents a second option from the norm; in this case, Aramark cafeteria meals. It is important to state clearly that alternative does not imply superiority. It is not the intention of this manual to suggest that The Seasoned Spoon Café is better than Aramark, more so, to define The Seasoned Spoon as a second option, and to address some of the issues alternative food sources on campus must face, in a personalized and orderly fashion.

In the article entitled *Creating Space for Alternative Food Sources*, Feenstra (2004) suggests that in order for alternative food options to take root and survive in any context, they must maintain four different types of space; social, political, intellectual and economic. These four 'spaces' reveal three important themes; public participation, new partnerships, and a commitment to social, economic and environmental justice principles. Each of these spaces and themes are apparent in the operations of The Spoon, and are supported by their mandate and policies.

Firstly, these four spaces take distinct form in the café. Its cooperative structure promotes democratic choice (Seasoned Spoon, 2008) which addresses the political sphere. The Spoon regularly undertakes research projects in partnership with the TCCBE (Trent Centre for Community Based Education), as well as offering a wide range of employment and volunteer opportunities to students (Seasoned Spoon, 2008) all of which contributes to the creation of intellectual space. Social space exists in the café in terms of both its literal dining area, but also in that The Seasoned Spoon effectively uses on campus space to create a social, community gathering spot. Although, The Spoon is a non-profit organization (Seasoned Spoon, 2008), the concept of economics is present in that there is still a need to make ends meet; thus creating a sustainable economic cycle.

The main objective of this café is to provide healthy, tasty, locally and organically grown, affordable food (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). As Feenstra (2004) asserts, this mandate suggests that The Spoon has a commitment to social, economic and environmentally just principles. The Spoon is dedicated to making relationships between local farmers, students, other organizations such as the TCCBE and the community thus creating new partnerships. Moreover, the cooperative structure lends itself to public debate and democratic discourse, addressing the theme of public participation.

In this respect, The Spoon incorporates all of the aspects that Feenstra (2004) deems necessary for the birth and survival of an alternative food source. Nonetheless, there is more to the equation than just creating and maintaining certain spaces, especially because The Spoon is primarily reliant on student employment and membership.

Every year a new crop of students arrives at Trent University, while others move on; this is what we refer to as student turn over. Although it has many benefits, one very large detriment of the yearly turn over is the lack of continuity throughout The Spoon staff and members. One major setback for The Spoon is the amount of time spent training and retraining, and familiarizing and re-familiarizing staff and Trent students with the café directive at the beginning of each year. Moreover, because of the frequent shutdowns (i.e. reading breaks and holiday season) a lack of continuity exists with respect to memory, and this presents a major problem for the staff. Essentially, after each break the staff must re-familiarize themselves and/or train new employees on a recurrent

basis. As a result, the organization lacks what is referred to as an institutional memory on a year to year basis.

Institutional memory is roughly defined as a structured, standard policy that is carried through each year to each new member of the institution; this policy may change over time, however it provides the structural guidelines and baselines by which the institution exists. Institutional memory at the Seasoned Spoon may include policy and practices on food storage, cooking methods, cleaning methods, daily routines, customer service and board work, among other things. Its memory is deeply rooted in the realm of experience and know-how held by a group of people well established in the institution. Institutional memory does not revolve around an individual, but rather a collective group of memories, knowledge and ideals. Although institutional memory is difficult to define in terms of theoretical value (Walsh and Ungston, 1997), we hope to use the above stated definition to help give a working meaning to the term during the course of this project.

The purpose of this research project is to improve the institutional memory at the Seasoned Spoon Café through the creation of a grassroots inspired manual. This manual will concentrate its findings on social aspects and history of the co-op while outlining the duties and players that keep the restaurant running on all sides of the table. By using interviews, photos, and personal volunteer experiences, the manual will showcase the growth and ideological strength that is The Seasoned Spoon. The manual will also be utilized as a tool to educate interested parties on working or volunteering with the restaurant, and also for other organizations wishing to create a similar co-operative experience. By using a “day-in-the-life” approach we hope to give an accurate description of the weekly routine followed at the restaurant, with contributing portions of The Spoon’s history in order to give the manual a point of relevancy. Also, through this approach the group will be able to uniquely view and comment on areas where policy and institutional memory can be improved. In short, we hope to create a spirited and accessible document outlining the employment opportunities as well as the functions of The Seasoned Spoon, accompanied by a short report of recommendations.

3. Methodology

In the interest of maximizing public participation in this project the primary method of information collection was through interviews conducted with key players within the organization. As Patricia Maguire highlights in her 1993 article *Challenges, Contradictions and Celebrations*, collaboration is integral to community based research, and this project was done with that in mind. Individuals from a variety of areas within the organization were interviewed in order to gain perspective on the views held by individuals dealing with the different roles present at the Seasoned Spoon. Transcripts from these conversations lend a personalized feel to the research, as well as present information about the responsibilities entailed within each position. Specific questions were designed for each of the individual players; however the list of research questions presented below provides an outline of the general topics discussed with all players.

Research was also conducted on the ideology of The Seasoned Spoon. Its mandate, policies concerning food sourcing, cooperative structure and conception were all explored in order to glean background information which has helped provide the context in which this paper is set.

4. Research Questions

- 1) What does the weekly regime of The Seasoned Spoon look like?
 - a) Where did The Seasoned Spoon Start?
 - i) What factors influenced its creation, and how do these affect what The Seasoned Spoon, its players, organizational memory, and presentation is today?
 - b) Who are the main players, and how do they contribute to the café?
 - i) Who are the players involved in The Seasoned Spoon?
 - ii) What is each player's role in The Café?
 - iii) What is each player's background, qualifications, or experience?
 - c) How does each player's experience add to The Seasoned Spoon collective?
 - iv) How do players become involved/ informed about The Café?
 - v) What does institutional memory mean to each of the players?
- 2) What creative improvements can be made to the present institutional memory?
 - a) How do we reflect a sense of personal history, individuality and character in the positions available at The Seasoned Spoon?
 - b) What consideration will need to be made when creating the institutional memory such that it is personalized to the unique history, players, and ideals of the café?
- 3) How can we holistically encapsulate the interdisciplinary nature of The Seasoned Spoon through this manual?
- 4) How can we integrate patron feedback into the daily regimes of The Seasoned Spoon?

5. The Cooperative Approach

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet a set of common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and solidarity (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Cooperative organizations offer voluntary and open membership, economic participation by members, autonomy and independence, education, collaboration between cooperatives, and general concern for community. The cooperative organizational structure is governed by its members and based on democratic member control through a one-member, one vote system (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). As such, one of a cooperative's key goals is to be accountable to its members and consumers. The Ontario Cooperative Development Association describes cooperatives as "*people united for the purpose and intent of mutual self-help,*" (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Cooperatives typically operate on principles of distribution of surplus to members and limited interest in share capital, however The Spoon is a nonprofit organization, thus the surplus is reinvested into the organization. Designed for the mutual benefit of its members, cooperatives also provide services for non-members, with different conditions or pricing criteria in place. The Seasoned Spoon Café reflects a standard consumer/user coop, where the people who use the coop for services constitute its membership.

This section has been drawn directly from The Seasoned Spoon website and their definition of a cooperative business arrangement.

6. Policy

As discussed, The Seasoned Spoon Café is run via a cooperative structure. It has also already been established what a coop is, and how that relates to The Spoon. This section is to address any questions regarding the functions of the board of directors. This section is designed to answer these questions by giving a brief description of the board's responsibilities and the current policies under which they function, as well as policies on food sourcing.

The policy for food sourcing at The Spoon involves the employment of one student for two weeks during the summer. This student is responsible for networking with local farmers, and organizing the food purchasing for the following year. According to The Seasoned Spoon (2008), all food served must be as ethical as possible; meaning locally and organically grown when there is potential to do so, as well as fair trade items. However, there are many other policies under which The Seasoned Spoon Café functions, and it is the duty of the board members to supervise the implementation of such policies.

The Seasoned Spoon board comprises nine positions, of which, five must be occupied by current Trent University students. The positions to be filled by students include secretary, chair, treasurer, vice chair, and staff liaison (Seasoned Spoon, 2008).

The remaining four positions are reserved for members; two of which are community representatives, and the other two of which are Trent faculty or staff members (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). All of these positions are delegated through an electoral process.

According to The Seasoned Spoon (2008) the collective responsibilities of the board members include several things. Firstly, they guide the overall “direction, management and long-term goals” of The Seasoned Spoon. They are also responsible for setting up, soliciting, reporting to, and creating the agenda for the membership meetings. Moreover, the board approves annual or semi-annual budgets and is in charge of their implementation. In conjunction with this they must also review the finances on an annual basis. Lastly, the board is responsible for issues concerning the staff; employment, evaluation, compensation and removal.

Furthermore, each of the board members has specific duties; each position has a function and list of responsibilities. Although these specific responsibilities are not listed here, they are available in The Seasoned Spoon's Policy and Bylaw documents.

The staff of The Spoon is decided upon by a hiring committee put together by the board. This committee may comprise board and cooperative members, non-members, as well as part or full time students at Trent University (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Staff is only hired for available positions, and the most qualified applicant is chosen. No member of the hiring committee will have personal interest or conflict with applicants, and no board member is permitted to seek a paid position within the organization (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Once hired, staff members each have their own specific responsibilities to be carried out on the job.

In addition, members also have specific rights and responsibilities. Members are defined as persons who buy a share of the cooperative. There is a differentiation in the type of memberships that the café offers; voting and non-voting. A non voting member can become a voting member by simply signing a voting register, but as a strictly non voting member, these people are allowed to attend meetings, and offer input, but cannot vote in the board of directors election process (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). However, once members are declared ‘voting’ they take on the responsibility of attending meetings and actively participating in voting.

The main responsibilities of all members include providing economic support by purchasing goods and services offered, keeping up to date records in the context of membership information, and abiding by the other policies and procedures of the café (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). However, all members also have several rights within the coop structure. They have the right to participate in membership meetings, elections, and volunteer opportunities (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). They may access café records and financial information, and they have the right to communicate suggestions about the operation of the coop to the board of directors. Lastly, they have access to membership benefits such as adjusted prices (Seasoned Spoon, 2008).

Now that the responsibilities and policies of each position within The Spoon have been discussed, the question remains; how do all of these positions communicate and what are the policies behind it? This shall be examined herein.

The main venue for communication between all of these players is the membership meetings. These meetings allow for all members to voice their opinions, and

to vote if they so choose, on predetermined topics. However, there are regulations regarding how and when these meetings occur.

There is one main, annual meeting in which board members are elected, reports are discussed, and membership decisions are made. There are also sporadic membership meetings throughout the year to adapt the policy as needed (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Special meetings may be called if more than ten voting members sign a petition (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). These meetings are scheduled at least ten days in advance of the event. Given these preconditions, in order for a vote to occur, at least one quarter of the voting population must attend the meeting (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). One voting member is allowed to vote only once, proxy voting is not permitted, and the majority rules (Seasoned Spoon, 2008).

It is apparent that all players of the coop hold several responsibilities and rights within the cooperative structure. With each position, specific duties and liberties are awarded. Lastly, and most importantly, the cooperative structure is guided by specific policies and bylaws that give form to The Seasoned Spoon Organization.

This section has been drawn directly from The Seasoned Spoon website and their definition of a cooperative business arrangement.

7. History of The Seasoned Spoon

The Seasoned Spoon Café evolved from the Stone Soup Project which was started at Trent University by the Ontario Public Interest Research Group's (OPRIG) Food Issues Group (FIG), in 2002. The original movement was initiated by six new students to Trent. Jessi Dobyms, Chris Eckley, Juby Lee, Karen Martin Sullivan, Linda Swanston, and Clayton Welwood, were the original six and all a part of the FIG. The goal of the project was to deliver locally sourced, organically produced soup to Trent students and staff on the basis of donations (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). This project elicited an extremely positive response and the need for an alternative food source on campus became evident. The founders of the Stone Soup Project and the FIG decided that it was necessary to present an alternative to the Aramark food provided on campus. At the first meeting of FIG the students decided that it was apparent that an alternative to the Aramark food should be provided on campus. Funding is an important component to the start-up of any business. The founders began to outreach to the Peterborough and Trent communities, and found generosity as second-nature to both. A finance committee was later established to organize the capital drive and was responsible for attaining kitchen supplies and other necessary start-up resources. Buzz around campus about The Spoon, provided an excellent source of outreaching to customers, word of mouth was and still remains an important part of The Spoons outreach to bring in new customers. The Spoons, current space was once and old professor's lounge that was never used, and was eventually transformed into The Spoon we know and love today. The Seasoned Spoon has managed to evolve from an idea to a wonderfully-delicious alternative food source, which provides fresh and local food at a reasonable cost. The Seasoned Spoon brought warmth, community Trent and its surrounding community.

8. Conclusion and Importance

The Canadian food system has evolved from a structure of localized trade of fresh goods to a multi-national, multi-step process in which food is viewed as a commodity. The result of this commodification of food is that its price does not necessarily reflect the cost associated with its production (Anderson, 2008). Within the present system significant biases exist that make it exceedingly difficult for small scale farms to succeed in the global market. A small number of large scale conglomerates with unsustainable and environmentally detrimental production practices entrenched within their policies, have gained control over large portions of the system through vertical integration (Halweil, 2004). Moreover, the system is biased at the consumer end level with many people experiencing limited food security as a result of their inability to fit into the global food system (Hubay and Powell, 2000). These people are typically members of the lowest economic bracket and have difficulty providing adequate quantities of nutritional food for themselves and their families. Others may oppose the ideals exhibited by the current food system to such an extent that they choose not purchase from a supermarket or other multinational food providers and are forced to seek out alternative means of food acquisition (Baker and Huh, 2003). This highlights the need for alternative strategies of food distribution in order to promote food security for everyone.

As stated by Kirwan (2004), these alternative strategies often hold the intention of fostering alterity in the food system and accomplish this through reconnecting food to the social, cultural and environmental context of its production. The Seasoned Spoon Café exemplifies the creation of alterity by connecting the consumer to the producer. It does this by a variety of methods, most importantly being their ethical food sourcing policies. The Seasoned Spoon promotes education of the social, cultural and environmental context in which food is grown through TCCBE projects, and volunteer and employment opportunities. Furthermore, The Spoon effectively uses on campus space to create a sense of community and social equality by providing alternative food to students, and promoting the local economy through fair prices for locally and organically grown produce. As an establishment that incorporates alterity into its values and mandate, The Seasoned Spoon has presented a healthy and sustainable source of food on campus.








However, as we have discovered through our research, issues arise in the implementation of an alternative food source, and also in the maintenance of such an organization such that it is self sufficient within the campus structure. At The Seasoned Spoon Café issues of poor institutional memory present themselves as a result of constant turn over of student employees and patrons. This high turn over means that valuable knowledge held by experienced staff is lost as they graduate and leave the university. As a result, a lot of time is dedicated to training and familiarizing new staff with café procedures, which, although necessary, is an extremely inefficient business practice.

The goal of this research is to accurately document the operational procedures and central organizational values that constitute the mandate of The Seasoned Spoon. We hope that this document will facilitate the necessary transfer of information across annual boundaries, for both staff and patrons.

In addition, it is our hope that this document lends context to the personalized, community spirit that is present within the organization. We hope to have created a basic institutional memory by outlining the duties and responsibilities of each player and presenting the historical and social context from which these players are based.




9. Suggestions

General Suggestions for The Spoon:

-  Communication and social skills development (making sure each player communicates with each other for smooth operations).
-  Storage and organization (More organization, and finding creative storage facilities)
-  Better advertisement: on campus (more attractive signs in more places)
-  Suggestion: repainting the sign on the window overlooking Champlain Hall
-  Orientation week: introducing first year students during the tours
-  Email new and prospective students at the beginning of the year, about workshops, and about promotions- to connect with Trent Community
-  Dealing with general attitude within The Spoon:
 - The atmosphere at The Spoon can makes people feel that they do not fit in
 - Stereotypes of grass roots organizations ('Hippies', chaotic and unorganized)
 - Hiring staff from different backgrounds; academically etc
 - Being open about hygiene policies- show policies more openly (This ties in with some stereotypes about grass roots organizations, so being open about policies can abolish these feelings)
 - Promote themselves as a more legitimate business (by organizing, and appearing legitimate)
 - Provide a more welcoming atmosphere

Suggestions for Positions at The Spoon:

Almost all positions at The Spoon suggested that better communication between employees and maintenance of a standard policy

-  Better outline of job expectations
-  Be strict with time management and keep track of all hours
-  Making sure that relevant positions touch base with board before they start

10. Glossary

Alternative Food: Food that is grown in a sustainable fashion; has low environmental impact, is socially just, and allows for adequate economic reimbursement for growers and suppliers. Food produced in this manner helps create community and social atmosphere, partnerships with local farmers and the broader community, and educational experiences.

Back of House: The kitchen area of the café where the cooking and food preparations take place. The chef, prep chef, volunteers and baker all work in this section. This area is not visible or accessible to customers.

Cooperative: A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet a common set of economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations, through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise (Seasoned Spoon 2008).

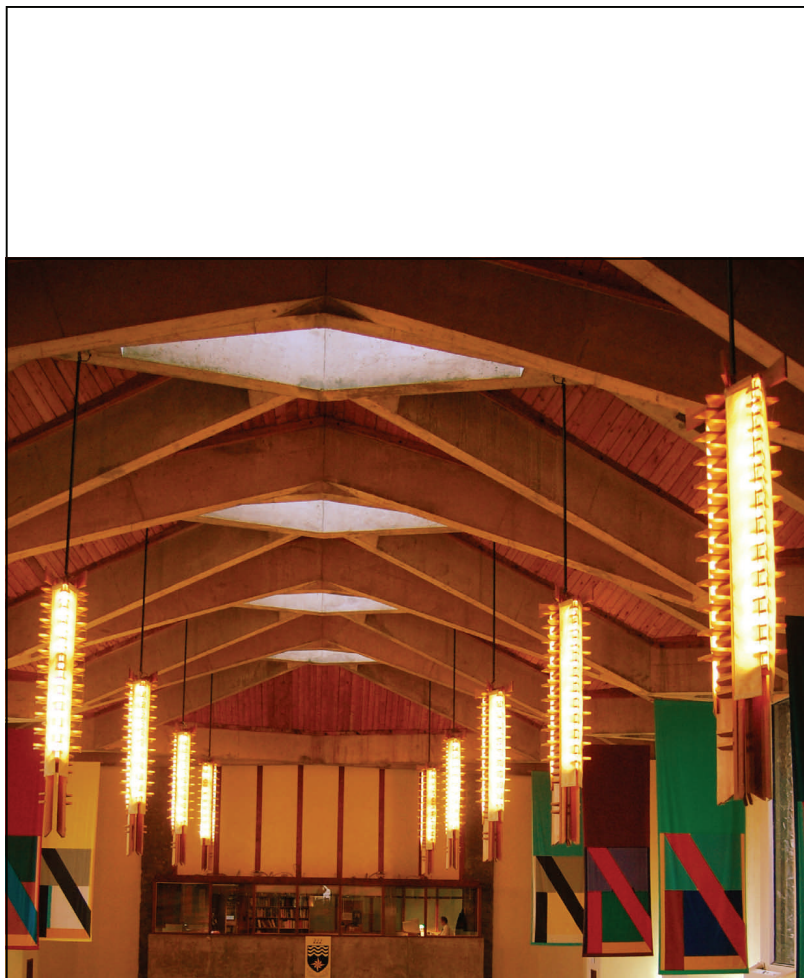
Front of House: This area includes the dining room where the cashier operates and where food is served. Typically, no cooking or preparation takes place here other than the brewing of coffee. This area is visible to all customers

Institutional Memory: Roughly defined as a structured, standard policy that is carried through each year to each new member of the institution; this policy may change over time, however it provides the structural guidelines and baselines by which the institution exists. Institutional memory at The Seasoned Spoon may include policy and practices on food storage, cooking methods, cleaning methods, daily regimes, customer service and board work, among other things. Institutional memory is deeply rooted in the realm of experience and know-how held by a semi-permanent group of people within the institution. It does not revolve around an individual, but rather a collective group of memories, knowledge and ideals which is recorded and stored in a universally accessible location.

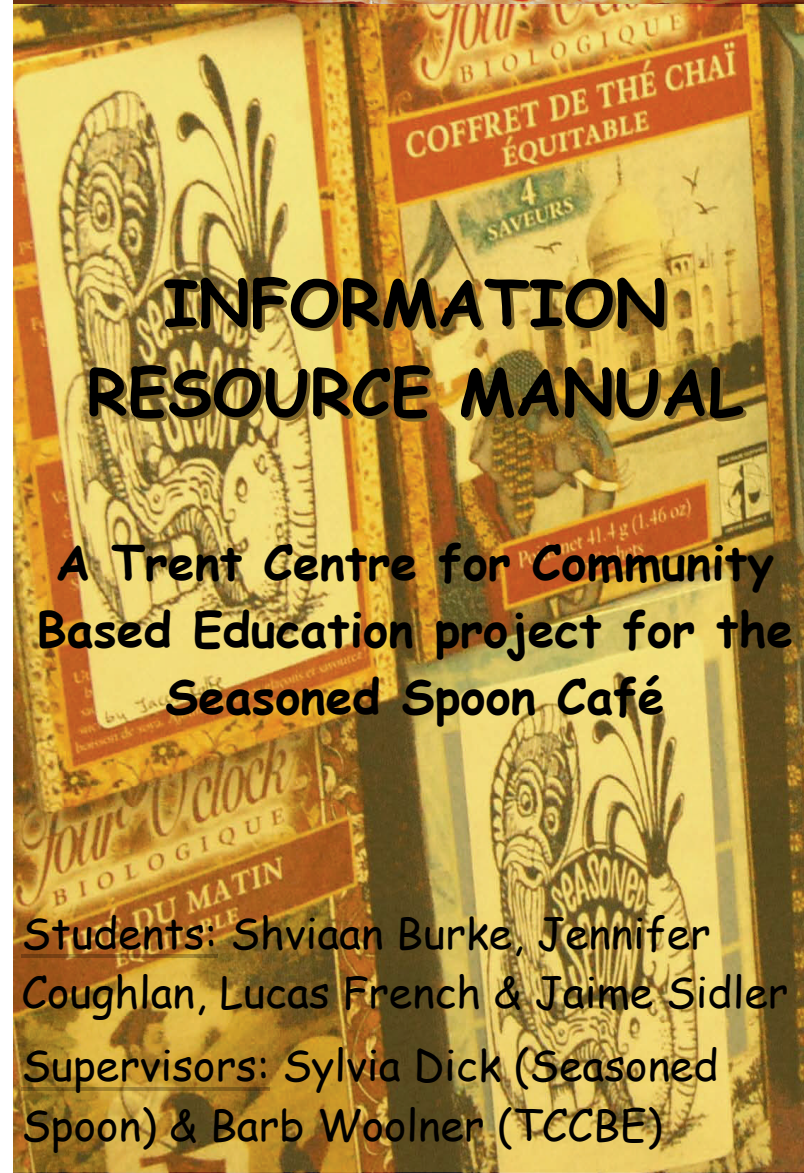
Student Turn over: The yearly cycle associated with the arrival of new students to Trent and the departure of graduating students.

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INFORMATION RESOURCE MANUAL

A Trent Centre for Community
Based Education project for the
Seasoned Spoon Café

Students: Shviaan Burke, Jennifer
Coughlan, Lucas French & Jaime Sidler
Supervisors: Sylvia Dick (Seasoned
Spoon) & Barb Woolner (TCCBE)

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Nembhard, Jessica Gordon. 2006. "Principles and Strategies for Reconstruction: Models of African American Community Based Cooperative Economic Development" in Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy, Volume 7: pp 1-5

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Author's Note

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The main ingredients...

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FIRST COURSE:

A Brief Introduction to The Seasoned Spoon Café

Introduction

Welcome to the Information Resource Manual for The Seasoned Spoon Café. By now, you probably know that the Seasoned Spoon Café is an alternative food source on Trent University campus. Whether you've recently been hired, are looking into volunteer or employment opportunities, or just want to learn about the organization, this manual is a perfect beginner's guide to alternative food at Trent. To begin with, you might be wondering: What is alternative food?

Alternative food

For our purposes, we use the term **alternative food** to describe food that is grown in a sustainable fashion, has low environmental impact, is socially just and provides adequate economic reimbursement for growers. In short, it's fair food; fair to the environment and everyone associated with it: the sellers, buyers, processors, and the growers. The Seasoned Spoon is considered an alternative food source because it offers this type of food. As a cooperative organization The Seasoned Spoon occupies space within the social, political, intellectual and economic spheres and promotes public participation, new partnerships,

dent employees and patrons. This high turn over means that valuable knowledge held by experienced staff is lost as they graduate and leave the university. As a result, a lot of time is dedicated to training and familiarizing new staff with café procedures, which, although necessary, is an extremely inefficient business practice.

The goal of this research is to accurately document the operational procedures and central organizational values that constitute the mandate of The Seasoned Spoon. We hope that this document will facilitate the necessary transfer of information across annual boundaries, for both staff and patrons.

In addition, it is our hope that this document lends context to the personalized, community spirit that is present within the organization. We hope to have created a basic institutional memory by outlining the duties and responsibilities of each player and presenting the historical and social context from which these players are based.



Huh 2003). This highlights the need for alternative strategies of food distribution in order to promote food security for everyone.

As stated by Kirwan in 2004, these alternative strategies often hold the intention of fostering alterity in the food system and accomplish this through the reconnecting of food to the social, cultural and environmental context of its production. The Seasoned Spoon Café exemplifies the creation of alterity by connecting the consumer to the producer. It promotes education of the social, cultural and environmental context in which food is grown through TCCBE projects, and volunteer and employment opportunities. Furthermore, The Spoon effectively uses on campus space to create a sense of community and social equality by providing alternative food to students, and promoting the local economy through fair prices for locally and organically grown produce. As an establishment that incorporates alterity into its values and mandate, The Seasoned Spoon has presented a healthy and sustainable source of food on campus.

However, as we have discovered through our research, issues arise in the implementation of an alternative food source, and also in the maintenance of such an organization such that it is self sufficient within the campus structure. At The Seasoned Spoon Café issues of poor institutional memory present themselves as a result of constant turn over of stu-

and commitments to social, economic and environmentally just principles (Feenstra 2004). After reading this manual, you will understand just how The Spoon fits the description of an alternative food source. Still, you may be thinking that this definition seems too simple; there must be more to it! You may be wondering, how does it work when The Spoon relies on students for staff and patrons? Does this change what it means to be an alternative food source for The Spoon? The answer is yes, but why is The Seasoned Spoon different?

Student Turn Over

Can you imagine running a business where you have to re-train and re-familiarize the staff every year? The Spoon has to deal with this issue every semester. **Student turn over** means that every year knowledgeable Spoon employees leave and are replaced by people who are less familiar with the organization. In addition, the café shuts down every reading break and holiday season, meaning the staff have to re-establish operations many times each year. This high staff turnover and continual state of re-familiarization means The Spoon has poor **institutional memory**.

Institutional Memory

When you think of institutional memory, what comes to mind? This isn't a trick question! Actually, institutional memory is hard to define in theoretical terms (Walsh and Ungston, 1997).

When putting together this manual, here's what we thought of for a working definition for institutional memory:



A structured, standard policy carried through an organization each year to each member



Can change over time, but it provides the guidelines that the institution exists by



At the Spoon it may entail policies and practices on: food storage, cooking methods, cleaning methods, daily routines, customer service, and board work



Based on the know-how and experience of a group of people who have formed the pillars of the organization; not just an individual.

Conclusion

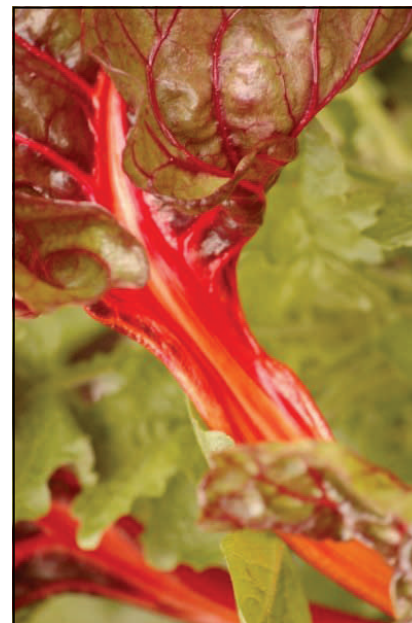
That's a wrap!

The Canadian food system has evolved from a structure of localized trade of fresh goods to a multi-national, multi-step process in which food is viewed as a commodity. The result of this commodification of food is that its price does not necessarily reflect the cost associated with its production (Anderson 2008). Within the present system significant biases exist that make it exceedingly difficult for small scale farms to succeed in the global market. A small number of large scale conglomerates with unsustainable and environmentally detrimental production practices entrenched within their policies, have gained control over large portions of the system through vertical integration (Halweil 2004). Moreover, the system is biased at the consumer end level with many people experiencing limited food security as a result of their inability to fit into the global food system (Hubay and Powell 2000). These people are typically members of the lowest economic bracket and have difficulty providing adequate quantities of nutritional food for themselves and their families. Others may oppose the ideals exhibited by the current food system to such an extent that they choose not purchase from a supermarket or other multinational food providers and are forced to seek out alternative means of food acquisition (Baker and



The purpose of this manual is to improve the institutional memory at the Seasoned Spoon Café through the sharing of experiences and information. The manual will concentrate its findings on the social history of the co-op while outlining the duties and players that keep the restaurant running on all sides of the table. Through the use of interviews, photos, and personal volunteer accounts, the manual will showcase the growth and ideological strength that *is* The Seasoned Spoon. We hope that it will be a useful resource for many people; yourself included, to learn about how The Seasoned Spoon really works. Hope you enjoy.

Bon Appetit!



Policy & Board of Directors

...a recipe for success!

As discussed later in the manual, The Seasoned Spoon Café is run in a cooperative structure. This section is designed to answer questions concerning the functions of the board of directors by giving a brief description of the board's responsibilities and the current policies under which they function.

The structure of the board of directors is based on involving the Trent and wider Peterborough community. There are two categories of democratically elected board members, both of which comprise unpaid positions. The first category is made up of community members and students. Positions include the secretary, chair, treasurer, vice chair and staff liaison (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). The other category consists of project partners such as Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG), Champlain College Cabinet, local farmers and Trent faculty. According to the Seasoned Spoon the board guides the overall "direction, management and long-term goals" of the Café (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). They are also responsible for setting up, soliciting, reporting to, and creating the agenda for the membership meetings. These meetings are the venue for approving annual or semi-annual budgets and implementing and



THIRD COURSE: Conclusion and Relevance

Thursday

Bright and early for kitchen staff...yet again!! A more thorough inventory is conducted and a grocery list is sent to the café coordinator to place an order with the ONFC (Ontario Natural Food Co-op). Fresh produce is ordered as necessary, bank deposits and laundry are done, and any other errands are taken care of.

Friday

Last day of the week means no leftovers! Food won't keep over the weekend so kitchen staff will use up all the fresh produce to make today's menu options. More baked goods are prepared for the day and a veggie order is placed for next week's menu. Thorough cleaning of the kitchen and vacuuming and laundry for the restaurant keeps things fresh for next week. Dishes are put away for the weekend and a two-week timesheet is made every other Friday. A complete inventory of the restaurant is done one Friday every month.



reviewing finances on an annual basis.

The board is responsible for issues concerning the staff; employment, evaluation, compensation and removal. Furthermore, each of the board members has specific duties; each position has a function and list of responsibilities. Although these specific responsibilities are not listed here, they are available in The Seasoned Spoon's Policy and Bylaw documents.

The staff at The Spoon is decided upon by a hiring committee put together by the board. This committee may include board and cooperative members, non-members, as well as part or full time students at Trent University (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). No member of the hiring committee will have personal interest or conflict with applicants, and no board member is permitted to seek a paid position within the.

There are two types of membership offered at The Seasoned Spoon; voting and non-voting. A non-voting member can become a voting member by simply signing a voting register. Non-members can attend board meetings and may have input but cannot vote in board elections (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). All members also have several rights within the coop structure. They have the right to participate in membership meetings, elections, and volunteer opportunities (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). They may access café records and financial

information, and they have the right to communicate suggestions about the operation of the coop to the board of directors. Lastly, they have access to membership benefits such as adjusted prices (Seasoned Spoon, 2008).

The main venue for communication between all of these players is the membership meetings.

There is one annual general meeting in which board



members are elected, reports are discussed, and membership decisions are made. There are also sporadic membership meetings throughout the year to adapt the policy as needed (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Special meetings may be called to address a particular issue if more than ten voting members sign a petition (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). These meetings are scheduled at least ten days in advance of the event. Given these preconditions, in order for a vote to occur, at least one quarter of the voting population must attend the meeting (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). One voting member is allowed to vote only once, proxy voting is not permitted, and the majority rules (Seasoned Spoon, 2008).

ready to continue preparing the menu items throughout the day as they sell out.

Staff and volunteer schedules are posted so that staff knows when they are working and who will be there to help them out.

Tuesday

The baking for today was done on Monday so kitchen and restaurant staff can quickly lay out fresh items. As with yesterday the kitchen staff arrives early and begins, with the help of yesterdays prep work, to prepare fresh made cuisine for the day's menu rotation. The front of house manager checks the inventory of fresh veggies and will place an order with the supplier if necessary. Bank deposits are also made for the three previous working days. Table cloths and aprons are put in the laundry as needed.

Wednesday

Business as usual for baking and kitchen staff...more baked goods are prepared for the next couple of days, coffee is brewed and soups and wraps are made for today's menu rotation. Weekly banking is also done on Wednesdays. Fresh vegetables are ordered if necessary and deliveries also arrive for some of the packaged and bottled goods, such as lemon juice. More laundry is also done.

A Week at The Spoon

...Takes a lickin' and keeps on

The Seasoned Spoon Café is in operation from Monday to Friday during the university school year. It is closed during reading breaks and holidays namely because it relies on Trent students as staff and patrons. Throughout the year various players have to collaborate in preparations so that the café runs smoothly during operation. The following is a general description of a week in the life of The Seasoned Spoon Café.

Monday

The beginning of the week sees much preparation for the busy times to come. The baker and cook begin their days at 8 am on Mondays, while the front of house cashier will arrive at 10 o'clock. The café doors open at 9 so it is important to have coffee brewed and hot water for tea ready for patrons. The goal for every morning is to have soups, wraps, and salad out for between 10:30. Once the day's menu options are prepared and out of the kitchen, the staff has time to look at the next days menu rotation and begin some of the prep for tomorrows staff. As business picks up through the day front of house staff must communicate effectively with kitchen staff so that the menu options don't run out. In turn, kitchen staff must be



SECOND COURSE: Personalized Job Descriptions of the Main Players at The Seasoned Spoon

History & Founders

...from the ground, up

At this point, you may be wondering how The Seasoned Spoon originated on Trent University's campus. It all began in



2002 with the establishment of a temporary development called The Stone Soup project, which was started by the Food Issues Group (FIG) of the Ontario Public Interest and Research Group (OPIRG). The Stone Soup project was a soup kitchen devoted to providing healthy, locally grown, and organic soup to students who faced food security issues (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). But how did the Stone Soup Project become The Seasoned Spoon? Well, The Stone Soup Project was met with an extremely positive response from students and staff alike, and it became clear that there was an unfulfilled demand for an alternative food source on campus. Through the work of six dedicated founders, The Seasoned Spoon Café became a permanent reality and a popular option for on campus food.

esses of the cooperative, or simply do not consume Seasoned Spoon food often enough to use the membership, the non-member patron contributes to the overall economic prosperity of The Spoon. Most non-member patrons are conscious of food issues and think alternative food on campus is necessary to achieve sustainability; especially in the face of monopolies and fast food, within an unsustainable food system. Other non-member patrons consume The Spoon food as a vegan or vegetarian option, or a healthier alternative to fast food.





Current Non-member patron: Leslie Wells

Leslie Wells, like many non-member patrons of The Seasoned Spoon Café first heard about its existence through word of mouth. Leslie has been a patron of The Spoon for 2 years, however she does not see the need to join as a member. Like several customers of The Spoon, Leslie finds that her visits are too infrequent for the membership to be of use to her. Notwithstanding, she does believe that it is her moral duty to support alternative food on campus.

General Description

The non-member patron plays a key role in the café dynamic that is often overlooked in similar cooperatives. They are customers that frequent the café, but do not become a member for any variety of reasons. Whether they don't have the finances to join, are not active in the democratic proc-

Founders

In 2001, Jessi Dobyms, Chris Eckley, Clayton Welwood, Linda Swanston, Juby Lee and Karen Martin-Sutherland began their studies at Trent. Although new to the campus and to each other, there existed a common interest among the group: food. Whether it was the politics surrounding it, the culture that shapes it, the social connection it feeds, or the environment it affects; each of these people was uniquely linked to food. With their awareness of the existing food system and their desire to change it, coupled with passion, determination and dedication, these six individuals embarked on a journey that would lead them to The Seasoned Spoon Café. The group quickly gained momentum and support from the community and the help started pouring in.

Funding

As the founders began to seek financial support, The Spoon began attracting customers through word of mouth. Meanwhile, a finance committee was established to organize the capital drive, and was responsible for attaining kitchen supplies and other necessary start-up resources. They canvassed everyone for money: from college cabinets to local and corporate businesses. They were warmly received by the community; getting donations of dishes and gift certificates. Eventually, the group obtained levy status from the student body, winning the highest number of 'yes' votes among any other Trent student group that year (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). They were subsequently awarded the Peggy MacKay Award for environmental activism by OPIRG.

The Seasoned Spoon as a Cooperative

...friends helping friends

A **cooperative** is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet a set of common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. The Seasoned Spoon is an excellent example of a student based, cooperatively run business directly serving the needs of its community.

In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Cooperative organizations offer economic participation by members, autonomy and independence, education, collaboration between cooperatives, and general concern for community. The Spoon does just this; providing the student population with an alternative option for healthy and sustainable food at affordable prices (Seasoned Spoon, 2008). Values such as self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, solidarity, and equality are all manifestly illustrated in The Seasoned Spoon's policies, bylaws and practices (Seasoned Spoon 2008).

General Description:

Members play a key role in the organization of The Spoon, because the membership fees provide part of the funds necessary to have this kind of dining option available on campus. They also represent a large part of the staff and board of directors that run the daily operations of the café and ensure the mandate and policies are upheld throughout decision making processes. Members also contribute to the formation of the board of directors through voting in Spoon elections. This gives them democratic control over the direction of the organization and allows for open communication within the cooperative. Having a membership also indicates to the proprietors of the food monopoly on campus that there are many people who support alternative food options and that the needs of these students must be met.



Member

The "meat" of a vegetarian co-op

Current Member: Shauna Brookes

The membership base at The Seasoned Spoon is what drives the cooperative machine behind



the café. Member, Shauna Brookes is a new student to Trent this year and has quickly come to fit in with The Spoon community. With a previous education in ecosystem dynamics, Shauna understands the importance of interconnectedness in a strong community, and ecosystems in general. Her decision to purchase a membership was based on her desire to eat less of the heavily processed food offered at other campus dining locations, and also by the fact that a membership affords her a reduced pricing scheme for Seasoned Spoon fare. As a result of having a membership she also tends to eat at The Spoon more often than at other on campus locations.



The cooperative organizational structure is governed by its members and based on democratic member control through a one-member, one vote system. Like many on campus alternative food cooperatives, The Seasoned Spoon originated in, and is maintained by a strong relationship among students who see the importance of alternative food, who value the alterity of local and organic farming, and who believe such an option should be available at the university. The cooperative structure emphasizes the importance of these students as members and advocates, thus reinforcing the student-cooperative relationship that is necessary for the survival of The Seasoned Spoon.

Café Coordinator

A well stocked pantry of passionate ideas...

Current Café Coordinator: Annie Whitty



Annie Whitty, the present Seasoned Spoon café coordinator, is all about good food and community. That is what got her interested in The Seasoned Spoon five years ago. She has a background in self-entrepreneurship, coming from a self-run child care business. Moreover, Annie has always been rooted in the community. She has been a part of family restaurants her entire life, part of a buyer's club for nine years, and has a community centered frame of mind. Her educational background in fine arts has also greatly contributed to her meaningful involvement in one of Trent's most unique and creative on campus spaces.





General Job Description:

The café coordinator is a "jack-of-all trades" type job; entailing managerial, book-keeping, and even mechanical skills. The main responsibilities of the coordinator include partaking in the hiring process, organizing staff scheduling and distribution of wages. Additionally, the coordinator is responsible for ordering all of the produce, transporting it to the café, picking up groceries, running errands, paying bills and doing bank deposits, making the budget, and dealing with the inevitable hiccups and breakdowns that occur in the café. Lastly, the coordinator effectively integrates strong organizational and communication skills into the workplace. Not only does the coordinator organize TCCB projects, catered events, answer any and all emails and phone calls, contact other universities interested in starting alternative food sources, and communicate with human resources at Trent; they also must be able to collaborate with people of all ages. Transgenerational communication skills are imperative in this position.

Outreach Coordinator

Spreading roots in the community...

Current Outreach Coordinator: Sylvia Dick

The outreach coordinator position was created to connect The Seasoned Spoon with the Trent community. As a former student to Trent, Sylvia Dick became interested in The Spoon during her education, and she is now the current outreach



coordinator. Hired in October 2008, Sylvia has been able to accomplish a lot in her short time at The Spoon. Her background in environmental education has facilitated her efforts to educate the Trent community on important food issues. Sylvia is self-directed and motivated; qualities which are essential for this position. Always looking for new ideas, and ways in which to spread awareness of The Spoon and its programs, Sylvia has a great creative skill set and ambitions, both of which give her a unique stance from which to view her role within the organization. Although this is the first year this position has existed, its importance and positive contributions to the organization are already evident.

volunteer on the list is given one 2 hour shift per week. An experienced volunteer is arguably the renaissance position at the café. A volunteer at The Seasoned Spoon has the advantage of being exposed to many different cooking skills and styles, and can translate these experiences in valuable work place training. Volunteer service often translates into paid employment at The Spoon which presents benefits for the organization as well as the employee; unpaid, on-the-job training as a volunteer eliminates the need for training an individual as a paid employee and allows them to "hit the ground running".





Volunteer

...The main grains.



Employee Interviewed: Jesse Klinglere

While The Spoon makes use of many volunteers each week, one of the longstanding volunteers, Jesse Klinglere was interviewed for this project. While not self identified as someone with a background in food, two generations of Jesse's family have made a livelihood in different sectors of the food system; her grandparents as farmers and her mother as a chef. With prospect of leaving Trent next year, Jesse's unique perspective is as valuable as her experiences at The Seasoned Spoon.

Although unpaid, volunteers at The Seasoned Spoon are an integral part of the café's operation, and their contributions are much appreciated by the staff. Typically, each

General Job Description:

The outreach coordinator is a paid, part-time position at The Seasoned Spoon, with 10 working hours a week. This position entails organizing workshops, supervising TCCBE projects, as well as promoting and advertising The Seasoned Spoon through different outreach activities and events. The coordinator works to find funding for advertising and to run the many workshops that are offered. It is paramount that the successful candidate for this position be well informed on the bylaws, policies and procedures of the café. On-the-job training and frequent communication with the board of directors will ensure a smooth transition for the incoming coordinator.



Café Manager

Keeping all the eggs in the basket...

Current Café Manager: Kat Lapointe

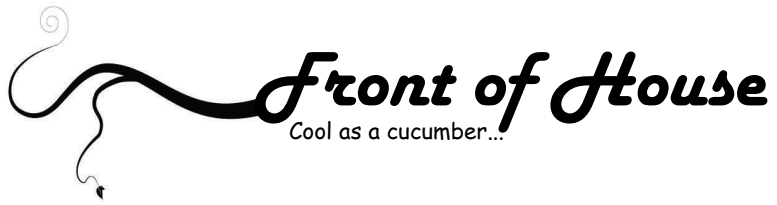
With most of its staff consisting of an ever-changing group of Trent students, The Seasoned Spoon must find a way to maintain continuity in the everyday tasks and responsibilities associated with the effective operation of the café. In September 2008 the position of café manager was annexed from the already existing café coordinator position. Kat Lapointe was hired into the position to assist with the administrative tasks at the café, as well as to foster communication among café staff and volunteers. Her experience working in a Fair Trade coffee shop in Ottawa allowed for a direct skill set transfer to her position at The Spoon. In order to prepare for the position Kat received on-the-job training and worked



kitchen she quickly became comfortable with the guidance of the staff and other volunteers. Jillian hopes to continue working at The Seasoned Spoon for the rest of her time at Trent.

General Job Description:

Front of house staff at The Seasoned Spoon carry out a variety of duties within a given shift. They are responsible for serving customers and operating the cash register as well as balancing the cash at the end of each day. They also keep the coffee flowing and make sure that the day's menu options are always stocked, through communication with kitchen staff. Whenever necessary the front of house staff will assist kitchen staff with other duties during very busy times. In general, all staff should be mutually helpful and strive to maintain an enjoyable and fulfilling atmosphere in The Seasoned Spoon Café for both patrons and staff.



Current Front of House staff: Jillian Marshall

The Seasoned Spoon Café hires Trent students to run both the kitchen and front of house operations. Jillian Marshall is a paid staff member at the café and works the cash and prep stations. Her personal awareness of certain food sensitivities as well as her belief that there should be a healthy alternative to cafeteria food at Trent, lead her to begin volunteering in the Seasoned Spoon kitchen in February 2008. Upon her return to Trent in September, she was hired on as paid staff. Although she had no previous experience in working in a



closely with the current café coordinator to become comfortable with her responsibilities. Her biggest focus as the café manager is to maintain open lines of communication on important matters like staff and volunteer scheduling and the flow of stock. In addition to ordering menu ingredients and completing the staff schedule, she also works on cash throughout each day, prepares bank deposits and helps with food prep in the kitchen.

General Job Description:

Organization is a quality that is an asset to any incoming café manager at The Seasoned Spoon. Given that this is such a new position, previous experience in managerial duties and kitchen prep would also contribute to successful and meaningful participation in café dynamics. Some of the responsibilities of the café manager include working in the front of house operations (i.e. stocking menu items and ringing through customer orders) conducting inventory, arranging catering events, training and maintenance of safe food handling and sanitary standards, preparing bank deposits, and helping out in other departments when necessary. Arguably, the most important function of the café manager is to keep information flowing between all members of The Seasoned Spoon team in order that things run smoothly from day to day, and throughout the season.

Look

...a job you can really sink your teeth into!



Current Cook: Taylor Wilkes

Currently Taylor Wilkes is the head cook at The Seasoned Spoon. Taylor attends Trent as an environmental science student and has found that her interest in sustainability attracted her to the ideals of The Spoon, while her background in catering allowed her to effectively contribute in the operation of the kitchen. As one of the leaders in the kitchen, Taylor finds that working at The Seasoned Spoon has been helpful in teaching her the importance of community at work; that working as part of a team is what

General Job Description:

The baker at The Seasoned Spoon is a paid position that offers three shifts a week, starting at 8 AM to ensure baked goods are ready when the café opens at half past nine. Because the baker does not work every day baked goods are prepared and portioned for two days a time. The baking is done in the kitchen at Alumni House, so ingredients must be transported there on a trolley. The transportation of ingredients back and forth to Alumni House makes good labelling and storage practices important in order to ensure the quality and freshness of all baked goods. The Alumni House kitchen is also used by other university staff so the baker must be mindful of their place within the university community and work in a way that does not prohibit others from using this space.

It is also important that the baker have a unique repertoire of recipes as they are given creative license to choose the dessert menu options for each week. It is very difficult to adhere to The Seasoned Spoon's mandate of local food when talking about products like sugar and chocolate. In the past the best option, while expensive, has been to purchase Fair Trade ingredients and use as much local fruit as possible while it is in season. The baked goods at The Spoon play second fiddle to the wraps and soup, so it is important to prepare just enough to meet the demand.

Baker

Knee deep in sweets!



Current Baker: Sylvia Dick

In addition to being the outreach coordinator, Sylvia Dick is also the baker at The Seasoned Spoon. She was drawn to this position by a long-time love for baking and her established commitment to the café. In her own personal experience at The Seasoned Spoon, Sylvia was hired as a cashier in her first year as a student at Trent, and then moved into a volunteer position as a way to manage stress. She now finds herself to be very happy with the freedom afforded to her as the baker for The Seasoned Spoon.

really makes action happen. In a restaurant that places emphasis on environmental sustainability as one of its main ideals, this type of attitude and working environment is of utmost importance.

General Job Description:

A cook at The Seasoned Spoon is a paid position with a variety of hours available with the shifts typically being 8 hours in length. The cook and prep cook arrive at the restaurant at 8 o'clock in the morning and begin preparing the day's menu items. Notes from the previous day's staff are checked to uphold the lines of communication. On any given day the cook along with the prep cook are responsible for putting out and ensuring the quality of two kinds of soup, two varieties of wraps, and a salad, while on busier days they may offer up a main such as lasagne or shepherd's pie. It should be noted that the onus of ensuring food quality, cleanliness and kitchen communication falls squarely on the shoulders of the cook. Once kitchen staff finish today's menu items, the focus turns to preparing ingredients for tomorrow's menu items.

Prep Cook

Soup for thought...

Current Prep Cook: Julian Weirisma

One of the current prep cooks at The Seasoned Spoon is Julian Weirisma. Through growing up on an organic farm and a unique educational background, Julian has fostered a connection with food and sustainability that made working at The Seasoned Spoon a natural fit. In his short time at the café Julian has learned that rigid structure is not the modus operandi of staff at The Spoon; that letting the community atmosphere foster growth in a more natural way has been the best learning method.

General Job Description:

A prep cook is a paid position with a variety of working hours available each week. As with many other restaurants, the job of the prep cook is to aid in the timely and effective production of food for sales at the restaurant. However, at The Spoon this job turns in a slightly different direction; towards a more cooperative approach between the chief cook and the prep cook. The menu rotation allows the kitchen staff to effectively delegate tasks based on each individual's forte. As such, a natural progression of learning takes place with new employees, where a new prep-cook could find himself "learning



through osmosis". This type of on-the-job training allows for the seamless and unforced transfer of knowledge between staff members.

Notes outlining the menu rotation and work planned for each day are kept in order that kitchen staff can communicate through the week and share important information like availability of ingredients. Although there is little formal training for this position, this method of communication and sharing of knowledge leads to a more organic growth of the café identity, and lends a certain flavour to The Seasoned Spoon's own personal brand of institutional memory.