

# Sharing the Next Big Step in Zingerman's History

## PUTTING A PERPETUAL TRUST INTO PLACE FOR OUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY



*Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold. — robin wall kimmerer*

Early in the New Year, on Thursday morning, the 18th of January, nearly 90 ZCoBbers gathered for our monthly Zingerman's-wide huddle at ZingTrain. About halfway through the get-together, as per the agenda, Paul—my business partner of 41 years—and I formally announced that, in essence, we were “giving away the store.”

Don't worry. The statement was serious, but it was said with a sense of deep calm, and a big smile. We haven't gone crazy, and the company remains, as it has for nearly all of our 41 years, in pretty healthy shape. In the best possible way, no, we're not going anywhere. *In fact, that's the point.*

While the phrase “giving away the store” is usually used to connote poor negotiation skills, in our case, “giving away the store” is actually a big, big win. It's something like ten years of challenging conversations and a whole bunch of very complex work coming to fruition in a formal sense. Which is why, although much of our organization has been involved in the project for quite a while (using Bottom-Line Change®), we can now formally share it more widely with the world.

The announcement in question is that we have formally rolled out what has come to be called a Perpetual Purpose Trust. In essence, it means that Paul and I are, over a period of many years, giving the Zingerman's “brand”—aka “the intellectual property”—to the business. In the spirit of the legal construct around which this work has been built, we're calling the program “Zingerman's Perpetual Purpose Trust” (ZPPT). It's an uncommon, but wholly uplifting, way to handle the long-term succession of the organization that remains true to the way we've tried to manage the business since we opened all the way back in 1982.

*The point of the Perpetual Purpose Trust is to keep Zingerman's in the Ann Arbor area, contributing in caring and meaningful ways, for many years to come.* It is designed to stay grounded in the community, to benefit the people who work in it, and to give some sense of security that the organization will stay true to our long-standing Guiding Principles and Mission Statement. Rather than both profits and power gradually moving further and further afield (as is quite common when a business gets to this stage), the ZPPT is a holistic way to keep decision-making for the business in the business, and the financial benefits of it right here as well. It's about continuing to work with all those things we love to engage with here at Zingerman's: vision, hope,

positive beliefs, inclusion, equity, long-term sustainability, a service mindset, dignity, continuous improvement, and commitment to community. It won't be perfect (nothing is), but it's meant, as per the name, to be perpetual. I won't be here myself, but if all goes well, I hope that in 2082, the Zingerman's Community will still be here, alive and well, celebrating its 100th anniversary, looking back on what Paul and I got going in 1982 as the almost “ancient” history that it will happily be.

### What does it mean to start a Perpetual Purpose Trust?

*If you want the nickel version of the ZPPT work, here are the highlights of the presentation:*

1. Over the coming years, this program will make Zingerman's intellectual property (IP) self-owned. (The Zingerman's businesses themselves are not part of this, and will continue, as they have been for years, to be co-owned and led by their very able managing partners with support from us and the rest of the ZCoB.) Very importantly, through the ZPPT, we will ensure that Zingerman's brand WILL NOT be sold to any outside company! *No going public, no franchising, no big “cash event,” no selling the business to some huge company on the West Coast that wants to buy us!* Eventually, of course, Paul and I will be gone, but the purpose and spirit of the organization can now stay put. And the other great leaders who have already been actively and effectively participating in running the ZCoB so ably will continue on apace.

2. Through this program, we will gradually be paying out more and more of the profit from the intellectual property to Community Share owners (staff who own a share in the IP). Over the next 20 years, that share will gradually increase so that *over half of the profit from the intellectual property will go to Community Share owners—people who, by definition, are actively working at Zingerman's!*

3. Along with the work we've already done to create our now 30-month-old Stewardship Council (more on this soon) and 30 years of consensus decision-making by our Partners Group to run the organization, ZPPT will allow for a sustainable, thoughtful, planned transition for me and Paul to move onward, upward, and outward in intentional and sustainable ways. I'm not going anywhere for a while, but it's good to get out front of these things!

4. This program will continue what we wrote in our 2032 vision (see the pamphlet “The Story of Visioning at Zingerman's” for much more on this) about sharing ownership more and more widely. As Robin Wall Kimmerer says, “The more something is shared, the greater its value becomes.” Rather than extracting and exiting, the idea is to enhance the whole and create greater equity (as opposed to the national trend towards greater and greater economic inequity) in the process.

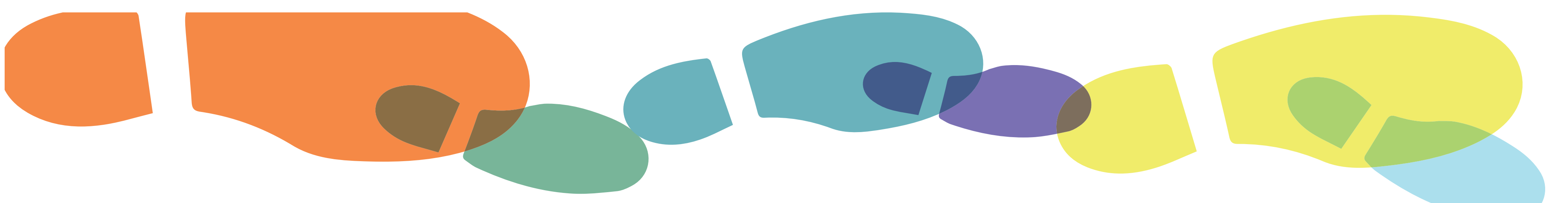
5. This work will help make our 2032 vision a reality, while living our Mission, Guiding Principles, and Statement of Beliefs, making the ZCoB a more and more attractive place to come and work. Joining a business where you have the opportunity to own a share in your first year, where you can come to meetings and meaningfully share your views from the get-go, and where, from day one, you really *can* make a difference, we hope, will benefit both those who work here and the business.

6. In the ecosystem metaphor, the idea of the ZPPT is to set up a structure that supports the organization as an “old-growth forest,” one that will continue to benefit the community of which we're a part and the people in the ZCoB for decades to come.

### A Story of Significant Reimagining

Poet Richard Blanco says, “Every story begins inside a story that's already begun by others. Long before we take our first breath, there's a plot underway, with characters and a setting we did not choose, but which were chosen for us.” In the spirit of which, although the event at hand happened that Thursday morning back in January, I'm going to start the story of the ZPPT a century or so earlier, at the end of the first week of spring 1915. On June 27 of that year, the second year of WWI, the woman the world now knows as Grace Lee Boggs was born in Providence, Rhode Island.

Boggs went to Barnard for her undergrad, then on to Bryn Mawr where she earned her Ph.D. in philosophy in 1940. Even with a degree in hand, she had a hard time finding work. As had been true for most of U.S. history, it was not an easy time to be an Asian American. Later in her life, she shared that, “Even department stores would say, ‘We don't hire Orientals.’” Fortunately for the world, she persevered, turning a challenging situation into a lifelong commitment to creating positive change. President Obama said of Boggs,



“Grace learned early on that the world needed changing, and she overcame barriers to do just that. She understood the power of community organizing at its core—the importance of bringing about change and getting people involved to shape their own destiny.” Grace Lee Boggs passed away in the fall of 2015, but in the back of my mind, her spirit was quietly present at our huddle last week. Throughout the hundred years of her life, she was very much an inspiration. I hope that the work we are doing here will, in some small way, follow in her footsteps.

Throughout her life, Grace Lee Boggs was very committed to community, to democracy, to dignity, to the development of what she referred to as “more human human beings.” Like us, she loved ideas, and yet, at the same time, she was also about actually doing the down-to-earth work to make those ideas come alive: “We can begin by doing small things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors.” All of which, we hope, will also be embedded in, and emerge from, this newly unfolding part of our organizational history as we integrate the ZPPT work into what we already do. I look to Grace Lee Boggs here because in a sense she models what I hope for the ZCoB—that it can live a rich and full life, contributing to the community in tangible and intangible ways, finding joy and making a difference for well over a century.

In an interview with Krista Tippett for On Being, released exactly two months after Boggs’ 100th birthday on August 27, 2015, Boggs elaborated on her beliefs, beliefs that quietly underlie the idea of the Zingerman’s Perpetual Purpose Trust program:

*The opportunity that we now have to reimagine everything, to reimagine work, to think of it as productive not only of things, but of well-being, to think of governance in a different way, to think of education in a different way. What an opportunity, what a time to be alive.*

*... We have the capacity within us to create the world anew.*

Bo Burlingham is the caring, creative thinker and business journalist who wrote the book *Small Giants* back in 2005, as well as the article that ran in Inc. Magazine about the ZCoB 20 years ago this month. Given that Bo’s been a positive part of so many hallmarks of ZCoB history, it was great that he generously joined us on the Zoom link the morning that we made the ZPPT official. Bo being there was timely, too, because his most recent publication happens to be about this very subject of succession. *Finish Big: How Great Entrepreneurs Exit Their Companies on Top* has been helpful to a wide range of business owners beginning to think about how to handle the work of “What’s next?” When Bo’s book was published, Perpetual Purpose Trusts were barely beginning to be known. The main options then available—and still, by far, the most common today—were selling the business, leaving it to family, or creating what’s called an “Employee Stock Ownership” plan. (The latter has upsides, and also some issues that make it unattractive for us—I’m not an expert, but I’m happy to share if you want to talk more.) With those paths to succession in mind, Bo recommends in the book that founders/owners getting ready to think about “exiting” begin by:

*Coming up with a number—that is, the amount of money you’d be happy to walk away with when the time comes—and a time frame. Stage two is strategic. It requires learning to view your company as a product itself, not just as a deliverer of products or services, and then building into it the qualities and characteristics that will maximize its value and allow you to have the kind of exit you want.*

#### Why Put Our Trust in This Way of Working

These are, to Bo’s credit, exactly the sorts of succession plans that you and I see in the press pretty regularly. Every few months I read about another values-driven, community-based company selling, usually to some multinational corporation whose offices are, more often than not, half a world away. For many people, this is the right way to exit. Long-time Ann Arborites will remember all too well, said with respect for everyone involved, that this is what happened with Borders. With good intentions, the founders sold the company to a much bigger business in 1992. You likely know the rest of the story. That outcome is the opposite of what we hope to create here. Instead of selling, we wanted to find a way for the ZCoB to settle in. The intent of the ZPPT is to help create a healthy thriving institution of an organization—one that is far greater as a whole than what any of us as individuals can do on our own—that is rooted in the community for many decades to come!

You may, perhaps, have heard recently that last fall Patagonia (a company that is WAY, way bigger than we are) is also doing a Perpetual Purpose Trust. They released the info last fall! I was happily surprised to hear the news—I’ve had the idea of doing something like this on my mind ever since I stumbled on the concept something like 10 years or so ago when I was reading E.F. Schumacher’s 1973 book, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. I can’t recommend Schumacher’s work too highly for many reasons, but it was particularly influential in the context of what I’m writing about here: *Small is Beautiful* changed my beliefs about succession planning and what is possible.

On page 264 of my very well-worn first-edition paperback, Schumacher tells the story of the Scott Bader Commonwealth in the U.K. The chemical goods firm was founded in 1923 by a Swiss immigrant to Great Britain named Ernst Bader. Bader’s small business grew steadily and successfully for many years. In 1951, as the company was approaching its 30th anniversary, for pretty much the same reasons we are doing it here, Mr. Bader created a version of a Perpetual Purpose Trust. If you want to learn more, there’s a wealth of great information about how Scott Bader Commonwealth works on its website, along with information about how they are celebrating their 100th anniversary. Even back in 1973 though, when the trust had been in place for just a little over 20 years, E.F. Schumacher was already saying, “Scott Bader—and a few others—remain as small islands of sanity in a large society ruled by greed and envy.”

Reading about the work of the Scott Bader Commonwealth inspired us to investigate the Perpetual Purpose Trust. We have adapted the ideas to our own ecosystem, and how we do it here will be a bit different from the way it plays out at Patagonia and at other places that are following this

path. The point, though, is the same—to really make businesses into community-based organizations that have the legal and financial structure that honors their people, their purpose, and their place. While profits of course matter, they are, as I’ve written elsewhere, only one part of what makes an organizational ecosystem healthy.

The main points of what Perpetual Purpose Trusts make possible were summed up pretty well in a piece in the *New Yorker* earlier this year. The details shared in the article are different from the way we’re doing it here, but the concept, intention, and format are still aligned with our approach:

*A perpetual-purpose trust [is] a trust that exists not for the benefit of particular individuals but to fulfill some purpose. ... The trusts become the legal owners of these businesses, and the business owners now have a fiduciary duty to fulfill its purposes ... Perpetual trusts last indefinitely, preventing future owners from discarding pro-social policies in favor of higher profits. ... As long as pro-social companies are vulnerable to acquisition by larger firms and investors who are likely to disregard their social mission, they will remain ephemeral exceptions to the profit-first rule. They will last only as long as their founders are able to keep working, and to avoid accepting investments with strings attached.*

This last bit is exactly what the Perpetual Purpose Trust here will help us avoid. Our hope in doing this work as we are is to steer completely clear of the kind of “cash event” that, while it enriches owners, sooner or later, nearly always leaves communities and colleagues without the richness that a community-minded organization had been contributing. In the context of the organizational ecosystem metaphor, I would compare that sort of approach to clear-cutting. You grow the trees, you harvest them, and when you’re ready, you take the money you “earned.” The problem is that the ecosystem is poorer for it. Canadian author and Professor of Forestry Ecology Suzanne Simard says:

*When a mature forest is burned or clear-cut, the planet loses an invaluable ecosystem and one of its most effective systems of climate regulation. The razing of an old-growth forest is not just the destruction of magnificent individual trees—it’s the collapse of an ancient republic whose interspecies covenant of reciprocity and compromise is essential for the survival of Earth as we’ve known it.*

Borders, as I mentioned, is the well-known Ann Arbor version of this. Nationally, you could think of Whole Foods—opened in the fall of 1980, which, like the Deli, was once a single community-based store in Austin. Said with respect for some of the great people who still work there, you know how that story goes. The work of the ZPPT is about going in the opposite direction. Instead of clear-cutting, we want continuity in the community. Rather than clear-cutting with me and Paul retiring to warmer climes with a lot of cash, the ZPPT work will, we hope, help to make it possible for the ZCoB to be the metaphorical equivalent of the sort of old-growth forest Suzanne Simard describes:

*An old-growth forest is neither an assemblage of stoic organisms tolerating one another’s presence nor a merciless battle royale: It’s a vast, ancient and intricate*

*society. There is conflict in a forest, but there is also negotiation, reciprocity and perhaps even selflessness. The trees, understory plants, fungi and microbes in a forest are so thoroughly connected, communicative and codependent that some scientists have described them as superorganisms.*

#### Trusting in the Future

Perpetual Purpose Trusts like this are still a relatively new option for business owners like us looking at succession. There are, right now, only a handful of them in the U.S., but the work of Scott Bader in Britain—now celebrating its centenary and still going strong—reinforces my belief that this isn’t just an idea that sounds good, but actually is a very sound idea. As we have so many times in our organizational history, we are choosing the road less traveled, in the belief that it will create the kind of “new concepts of economy, new concepts of governance, new concepts of education” that Grace Lee Boggs spoke of. And that as she believed, they can give us the “capacity to create the world anew.”

Speaking of opting for newly-created, alternative, and off-the-beaten-path plans ... in August 1915, the same year that Grace Lee Boggs was born, Robert Frost published his poem “The Road Not Taken” in *The Atlantic*. Frost’s framing has been an unconscious theme throughout all our years in business. We’re very, happily, familiar with roads less traveled. In the long run they have led us to excellence, while in the near term they often mostly elicit eye rolls. Responses when we rolled out the 2009 Vision in 1994—where we declared to the world that we were staying local, deciding not to franchise or open all over the country, and have actual managing partners who owned a big part of their business—ranged from shock to surprise to some serious head shaking. In hindsight, that’s the first of many times we decided to “give away the store.” And that one sure seems like it’s worked out reasonably well. We hope the best for this new part of our organizational path as well.



Whatever we have created here at Zingerman’s is, of course, a product of the collective efforts of all the many terrific managing partners, thousands of ZCoB staff and suppliers, and what must now be many millions of caring customers over the years, all of whom have given of themselves to help make Zingerman’s what it is. Without you, none of this would be possible. I appreciate you ALL deeply. I also want to share very deep appreciation here to our amazing attorney, Gary Bruder, who’s done extensive work to make the ZPPT program a reality. I could write an entire essay on the remarkable way that Gary brings together grace, good business sense, care, effective adherence to ethics, and legal acumen. He is, I will suggest here, the sort of “more human human being” of whom Grace Lee Boggs wrote.

During the years that we’ve actively been working to make this happen, we have been ably guided by Natalie Reitman-White and the folks at Alternative Ownership Advisors in Portland, Oregon. I will highly and happily recommend them to any of you who are interested. (Tell them I said “Hi!”) And of course, last on this list, but definitely not least, enormous appreciation to Paul. Forty-one years ago this week, we were working to renovate the Deli building to be ready to open as we had planned in mid-March. We made our deadline—March 15 marked our 41st anniversary. To come to this point and still be spiritually and strategically aligned as partners is something truly special.

#### A Love for People and Place

In 2011, in what would turn out to be her final book, entitled *The Next American Revolution*, Grace Lee Boggs wrote:

*The main reason why Western civilization lacks spirituality, or an awareness of our interconnectedness with one another and the universe, according to Gandhi, is that it has given priority to economic and technological development over human and community development.*

We have tried, for 40-plus years at Zingerman’s, to humbly and caringly cook, serve, and sell good food, make a positive workplace for all involved, and diligently pay our debts as we do it—all the while actively supporting spirit, honoring interconnectedness, and contributing positively back to both. The idea of the Perpetual Purpose Trust is to create a construct that gives the Zingerman’s Community of Businesses a good chance to keep doing it for many decades to come. As E.F. Schumacher says, our commitment remains to do it all “as if people mattered.”

In the On Being interview released in the summer of 2015, Grace Lee Boggs said,

*We are living in a time of enormous changes, and we have the opportunity to change our thinking, to change our philosophy, by responding to and really trying to understand what’s happening, what time it is on the clock of the world. ... We have now the opportunity to rediscover who we are.*

This step, creating a Perpetual Purpose Trust for Zingerman’s intellectual property, is small in the scheme of the world, but still very important in the context of our little Community of Businesses here in Ann Arbor. It is, I hope, exactly the sort of positive change Grace Lee Boggs believed was possible. To give back and go forward together, instead of giving up and getting out. It’s taken us 10 years to get here, but our hope is that we can help Zingerman’s continue on as a thriving, healthy, imperfect organization, supporting the people who work here and being a positive anchor in our community for 10 times that long. If things go well, I hope we can, like the Scott Bader Commonwealth and Grace Lee Boggs, hit a hundred.

Grace Lee Boggs said of her husband, the activist and writer Jimmy Boggs, that he “used to remind us, revolutions are made out of love for people and for place.” That is certainly our motivation here. I’ll send you off with a statement from Grace Lee Boggs that seems right for the moment. A good reminder for us, and maybe for you, too:

*A revolution is to create new truths about human beings and society. There is no proof really that the road you are taking is the “true” one. You have to make it true.*

When I doubt myself, as I will inevitably do every day as we move forward, I will remind myself of Grace Lee Boggs’ very wise words.

Here’s to trust, a positive sense of perpetuity, and a lot of good Zing-things to come.

Ari

# ZINGERMAN'S FOOD PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION

the zcob's retail buyers share how and why they choose what to carry

Before she went to grad school to get her degree in the subject, the amazing writer and activist Grace Lee Boggs said, "If you would have asked me what philosophy is or was, I would not have been able to tell you." Same goes for me. Back in 1982 when we opened the Deli, if you'd have suggested we begin product selections by starting out with a conversation about food philosophy, I don't think I would have responded very well. I'm sure I'd have been polite, but I'd probably have just pushed the question aside. Philosophy to me seemed like something for ... philosophers; obscure issues, essentially irrelevant to everyday life—conversations that were reserved for ethereal exercises into existentialism. As is true of so many things in my life, it turned out that I was totally wrong. Last month I published an entire pamphlet entitled, "A Taste of Zingerman's Food Philosophy: Forty Years of Mindful Cooking and Eating."

What's clear to me all these years later is that, although I didn't know it, we have had a food philosophy here at Zingerman's since the day we opened. Forty-one years later, it's clearer, and more effectively elucidated, but it remains true to what we had in Paul's and my heads back on March 15 when we opened the doors of the Deli for the first time. The conversation that follows—along with the one we shared in the last issue of *Zingerman's News*—is evidence of how firmly rooted that philosophy is in our organizational culture.

Sitting here in the spring of 2023, I see very clearly that our philosophy underlies every decision we make and every action we take. Everything we cook and bake, every shot of espresso we pull, and every cup of cappuccino we craft—every item we select and then sell. The details of our food philosophy—as well as how you can gain clarity and create one of your own—are all in the new 80-page pamphlet. What follows here is an unscripted conversation amongst half a dozen or so of the leading culinary lights in the ZCoB. I was going to say that we did no prep for the discussion, but I realized right away that that's wholly inaccurate. As you'll see from the intros, all of these folks have been "prepping" for many years.

Scientist and writer Dacher Keltner says that "Awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world." And that is exactly what happened to me during the course of this conversation. I was amazed by how much everyone at the table has internalized our philosophy, how well they can explain it, and how well they make it come alive, selecting the products that go on our shelves. If you buy a cheese, an oil, a vinegar, a bar of chocolate from us, they will all reflect that quality we're looking for! The quality and clarity of the conversation are a testament to philosophical coherence. The consistency of philosophical expositions for everyone who was part of it is the best evidence I can offer to myself as a self-doubting CEO and/or to you to demonstrate just how deeply this work is rooted in our organization.

My friend, writer, theologian, and philosopher Sam Keen once said something along the lines of, "You'll starve to death trying to eat cook-books." In the spirit of Sam's statement, I was musing that you can't eat the Zingerman's food philosophy. But then I realized that's actually inaccurate—you eat it (and drink it) every time you eat something we have made, served, and/or sold you. While some incongruities and unintentional screw-ups are inevitable, we work hard to make this philosophy come alive in every piece of farmhouse cheese we sell at Mail Order, each leg of fried chicken at the Roadhouse, Reuben at the Deli, slice of Bakehouse bread, or piece of fried tofu from Miss Kim ... all are real-life manifestations of how well we are putting our philosophy into practice. So too are all the amazing products that the folks in this interview are selecting for us!

All these years later, it's very clear to me that Zingerman's would not exist as it is without this deeply rooted philosophy. Paired with the work that we are doing on our Perpetual Purpose Trust (see pages 1-3), the effective embracing of our culture that's evidenced in the conversation that follows will, I hope, help the Zingerman's Community of Businesses stay healthy and vibrant for the next 41 years and more!

Ari

At the table: Jennie Brooks, Alex Hall-Ruiz, Sean Hartwig, Brad Hedeman, Valerie Neff-Rasmussen, Allison Schraf, Lexi Stand, Ari Weinzweig

**Ari:** For the folks reading along, please let us know a little about what you do here and then share how your own understanding of good food has evolved since you got here.

**Brad Hedeman:** Brad at Zingerman's Mail Order. I started in the ZCoB in 1994 at the Deli, first in the bread box, then worked retail, and also did the sandwich line towards the end of the 90s and a little bit in the aughts. And then have been at Mail Order every holiday since '94. In the current capacity (in marketing and product selection), that Alex and Val also kind of hold, since the early aughts or something like that. I didn't know anything about food when I got to Zingerman's outside of steamed artichokes and mimosas—which my dad liked. I think what really clicked with me and what I still try to hold on to—so it really hasn't changed too much—is how approachable really good food is. In the 90s, if you weren't reading *Fine Cooking* magazine or if you didn't know Julia Child's show by heart, or if you didn't have all the right cookbooks, then specialty food or artisan food wasn't for you. I think something that we've done really well, and something that Ari did for me on my first day, is to help demystify "specialty food" and make it approachable for everyone so that everyone can see themselves using it. I think that's something that we try to do well in the catalog is to put that vision of the person using the food, enjoying the food, serving the food into their minds so that it kind of does demystify, and it makes them not as intimidated by the kinds of things that we sell, even at the prices that we sell them for. That's how it's evolved for me.

**Allison Schraf:** I have been the Manager and Buyer for the Candy Store since it started in 2017. I've been with the ZCoB for a total of 19 years. I did about six or seven years at the Deli and then was gone for six years and then came back in 2012. One big overriding thing that has changed a little bit since my Deli days is that there's a place for, "This is a good example of what this product is trying to be" in the ZCoB. We don't have to be in the realm of the wildly rarified. I like there to be something for everyone in the Candy Store. The definition of good food can be very broad. It can be a really good version of something that's tasty and enjoyable but doesn't have to be super duper artisan.

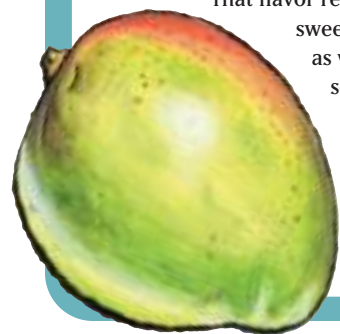
**Sean Hartwig:** I'm a Specialty Foods Manager at Zingerman's Deli. I started after Brad in the late 90s and then I went away, and I came back in 2011, right before the build-out at the Deli. I came from Grand Rapids working in kitchens ... and then I got to Zingerman's and realized how little I knew and how much I enjoyed learning about very specific foods—where they came from and how they could go together. The anthropology of food and cultures and how it intertwined with my own history was a fascinating journey. Once I had what I felt was a decent lexicon, I could then convey that to our guests walking through the door. Eventually, I became the Specialty Foods Manager and in charge of our cheese program. I was given all these amazing relationships and products, and my job is to be an ambassador—to amplify the work of others who have been in my role and to carry that on across training for staff and conveying the value of our products to guests.

## Val's new fave dried ywin mango from yun hai

Several months back, we tasted these dried mangos from Taiwan. I'm a big fan of dried mangoes, and these were by far the best I've tried. The fruit is plump and tender, not at all leathery. And the flavor is a knockout—just pure, clean mango.

That flavor really shines through because there aren't any added sweeteners or additives. When we first tried them, as much as we loved them we thought they weren't a fit; the price seemed a bit high. But in the months that followed, we couldn't stop thinking about how great they tasted. We kept talking about it. Finally, we decided to bring them on. We started selling them about four weeks ago. We've already sold out twice!

Get yourself a bag from Mail Order at [zingermans.com](http://zingermans.com).



**Valerie Neff-Rasmussen:** I work at Mail Order, I've been here 12 years, and, with Brad and Alex, I do a lot of the marketing and product selection. I don't know that I have a lot that's different from what everybody else has said. Certainly watching ingredient lists and trying to avoid the unpronounceable ingredients is always really valuable. I agree it doesn't have to be a rarified thing that you're only going to use one day of the year because it's so special. It's also great to have the food that you're gonna eat three nights a week because you like it so much and it doesn't have to be the fanciest, most expensive thing, but the thing that you can enjoy continuously. Maybe that's a good way to put it. Pasta is a good example. If I'm tasting one that we're thinking about selling, I like to taste it hot and fresh, and I like to hold on to some and taste it cold. And that really holds true for so many things. For coffee, same thing, if you drink it, hot, maybe it's good, but if you drink it cold and it's terrible then you know it doesn't hold up. Cheese, same thing. Usually, you want to enjoy it at room temperature, but if it's still really good even when it's straight from the fridge, that maybe is another different way to think about it. Can you enjoy it lots of different ways? Or do you have to have it the way that it's most perfect and otherwise, it's not any good?

Sometimes I'll go to visit a producer. Robert Lambert is a really great example. He said to me once, "If I could just chop bell peppers all day long and do nothing else, that would be my ideal job." So many of our vendors love making the food. That's all they want to do. They don't care about selling it. I've heard Andy Hatch say the same thing. He doesn't want to sell the cheese, he just wants to make the cheese. I love your point about storytelling. Being able to tell those stories, to be a partner with the people who want to wake up at 5 am every morning and go out and milk the cows, which sounds like hell to me, but I love being able to tell their stories and help to spread their gospel and help maybe push the needle in the direction of people understanding someone who's making handcrafted, beautiful products and how that's different from, you know, the vacuum-packed block of cheddar that you could get at the grocery store for \$2.99 and why you might choose to do one versus the other. Being able to share those stories is so valuable and so important.

**Jennie Brooks:** I'm the Chocolate Specialist at the Deli. I started out at the cheese counter at the Deli. I was there for about three years before I took this job, and now I've been in this role for about three and a half years. So, in total, about seven and a half years. As far as my evolution of food and processes, I think the thing that stands out is getting to know the time that's needed to make great food taste great. That rushing the making process, and taking shortcuts in ingredients, really affects the flavor and the final product. As far as that goes with chocolate, that can mean the unique and complex flavors that can come from finding wild-grown cacao, experimenting with fermentation and roasting to bring out the best qualities of a specific batch of beans, or using high-quality sugar sources or inclusions and such.

**Alex Hall-Ruiz:** I work at Mail Order, I do marketing and product selection with Brad and Val and I think I'm coming up on six years now at Mail Order. As far as how good food has changed for me, I have always been a food person. When I was growing up, people would ask what my hobbies were, and I would say, "I like to eat, I like food, I like to cook." So the fact that somehow working with food became my job is insane to me. But I think what's changed is that I can recognize now that good food is a very personal thing and I think I mean that in two ways. First, it's a very subjective thing and it can be really hard when tasting and evaluating to put aside my personal tastes and my personal preferences to taste as Allison says: "Is this the best example of something that it could be for what I want to sell?" Just because I don't like it or it's not the texture I want, *is it what it should be?* But also, it's really personal because we get to tell the stories of these people who are making the things we sell. My goal is to really share that experience and to give that kind of personal touch to everyone who's tasting the food. I think the best foods evoke a memory or evoke kind of a sense of a place, a person, a feeling. All of those things can be really wrapped up in the perfect bite and it can be really simple. It can be something as simple as mustard or pasta and to be able to put that much personal meaning into something, that is really amazing.

**Lexi Stand:** I've worked at Zingerman's Creamery for almost two years. I'm the Retail Manager and the Gelato Manager, and I also produce the gelato, so I have a few different roles here at the Creamery. I went to culinary school at Kendall College in Chicago and we used a lot of similar ingredients that the Bakehouse uses. We were very spoiled. Coming out of culinary school and going into high-production bakeries, there were always cheap ingredients. Coming here to Zingerman's, knowing that the labels include maybe a few ingredients—I appreciated that the most and that's how it's evolved for me.

**Ari:** When you think of Zingerman's food philosophy, what guides your decision-making when you're considering a product for the ZCoB?

**Alex:** From Mail Order's point of view, I think about our product assortment. What are we missing? Do we need to fill any gaps? I fall back a lot on the traditionally-made and full-flavored aspects of food. How does it taste? We taste everything before we sell it. Also, how is it made? Is it made how it has been made, and how it should be made? So, I fall back on those two things a lot when I'm kind of questioning: "Is this something that would be a good fit for us?"

**Brad:** We keep our audience in mind in all we do. Seventy-five percent of what goes out our door is being sent as a gift, so we want folks to feel that they can trust us to select great versions of a Comté or a Parmigiano, for example, that really stand out. People have a lot more experience with and knowledge about artisan food than they used to have back when I started, but I think we still kind of hold on to that core belief of introducing people to food that they might not know very much about yet. When we curate and present our product selection, that's still the audience that we have in mind.

**Sean:** I think there's continuity between brick-and-mortar Deli and Mail Order, and the sense that we both sell ZCoB products, and we serve a different audience in a different way. Knowing your guest and your consumer is key. It's something we're constantly learning more about as we implement new systems and ways to interpret our guests and their habits. At the Deli, we can't have everything. And, as Alex was saying, the tenets of our selection are traditionally-made and full-flavored. Outside of that, you have buttressed the role of the buyer at the time and their learning curve and what they bring to the Deli, and then the physical capacity of the Deli and what we can sell. We can't sell everything, but what we do sell needs to be unique. As much as we'd love to carry everything, we learn more and more about the value of unique products. You don't see a new product pop up every day that works for us.

**Allison:** Everything that everybody's been saying sounds like you're in my head, too. Something that is constantly in my mind as I taste and train staff: There's a difference between "Do I like it?" and "Is it good?" That was something I learned from Ari a very, very, very long time ago. I think it was my very first food class. You'll get there. Just keep going. I've been trying as much as I can to find those unique products that not everybody

## Brad's new fave raspberry hibiscus preserve from Vermont

In more than 20 years of sourcing food for Zingerman's, one product that's been exceptionally hard to find is a truly exceptional raspberry preserve. To my palate, so many preserve makers are not able to capture the delicate texture and flavor of raspberries without making it seem like an overly sweet paste with seeds. Enter our friends at Blake Hill in Windsor, Vermont. They've been making English-style marmalades and preserves for a number of years and I'm pleased to report they've cracked the code on raspberry preserves. Working in small batches, they cook the raspberries with hibiscus petals and a low amount of sugar to let the bright, floral notes of the hibiscus balance the sweeter peaks of the berries. How they're able to manage this alchemy without disrupting the bubble-thin-about-to-burst texture of ripe raspberries, I'll never know. But I'll keep eating it with toast and serving it alongside my favorite cheeses for the foreseeable future, easy. Get yourself a jar from Mail Order at [zingermans.com](http://zingermans.com).



likes, or doesn't think they like yet, and be on the leading edge of, you know, Scandinavian licorice in the Midwest and all of that kind of stuff, because we've got to differentiate somehow, and that's how. For something like marzipan, that's obviously a really ancient product—and so is licorice, actually. So that's where you sit down and do some research. I read as much as I can and, of course, taste. You just look, and you look, and you look, and you talk to as many people as you can to learn.

**Jennie:** I'd like to second everything that's been said as far as picking products, and definitely taking requests. Marzipan was a request for the last few holidays, and I finally brought it in [to the Deli] this past year. It was great. Next year, I look forward to bringing in more. Also, I consider how the product fits into what is already in our offerings. As far as chocolate bars go, maybe looking for something in a higher percentage, or an inclusion. A couple things that I am really looking for are not just single-origin, but made-at-origin bars. And then on top of that, made-at-origin bars that have inclusions that are unique flavors to that area as well. I'm constantly evolving as far as my personal professional palate, too, going that route.

**Val:** I would echo so much of what everybody said: something full-flavored and traditionally made, since we always start with tasting something that is unique but also easy for lots of people to love. Something that doesn't replicate everything that we already sell, but I would say, too, there are a lot of practical things that maybe aren't the fun, sexy pieces of what we're looking for. Especially since we're shipping, it is something we're going to be able to ship successfully? We don't want you to get a broken box of cookies when it arrives. Is it something that we can successfully store and hold on to until you're gonna get it? If it's this really beautiful cheese but it's got a two-week shelf life, it's gonna take a few days for me to ship it to you, are you necessarily gonna eat it the exact day that you get that cheese as a gift? Maybe not. A lot of what we're considering is whether this going to be a really great experience all around. Not just whether it is going to taste good, but are you going to know how to use it properly because the instructions for how to prepare it on the box are helpful? Does it have good ingredients that aren't going to be too long of a list, like Lexi was saying, or anything unpronounceable. All of that stuff can make or break a product even if we think it tastes really great. If one of those practical things doesn't work out, then it's not ultimately going to be for us.

**Sean's new fave**  
**Goatclette from Wisconsin**  
 Head cheesemaker Veronica Pedroza has developed a bunch of recipes for a bunch of dairies over the years. She calls Milwaukee home these days, and Blakeville's goat dairy in Port Washington is a short 40-mile commute. Goatclette is a fun interpretation of the Swiss Valais classic cow's milk cheese and namesake (raclette). If you love making raclette, then trying it with this Wisconsin original is a must.  
**Head to the Deli to get your hands on this unique cheese or online at [shop.zingermansdeli.com](http://shop.zingermansdeli.com).**



**Brad:** There's something that Ari said years ago, decades ago probably by now, that has always stuck about the value of *flavor*. I remember selling nine-dollar bars of chocolate at Zingerman's and people coming up and saying, "Well I can get a Hershey's bar for a dollar." I'm like, "That's right. You can get nine Hershey's bars for the price of this one. But you'll eat one Hershey's bar and you won't remember anything of it 30 seconds later. This bar breaks into nine squares. This one square is gonna linger for minutes. You're gonna talk about it. You're going to want to share this with your friends. The value of flavor, the economy of flavor you're getting out of this nine-dollar bar, is immense compared to those things. You have to buy nine Hershey's bars to equal the flavor of just this one here. Yes, it's pricy, but it's a really good value when you feel the experience of it. It's something I always think about, when we envision what the experience is going to be like for the person eating. I don't think a lot of people think about that. They think about how something looks on the shelf, how to sell it. But to think all the way down to where it is at their home, and that one moment when they're sitting at the table, maybe with a cup of coffee or glass of milk. That full experience is something that we take all the way through and think about, with all the products that we sell.

**Sean:** I tell guests if they chew slower, it's pennies per bite.

**Valerie:** Before I was really doing any product selection, I remember asking someone what makes the decision for us and the answer being that every food we sell should be so good that the

instant you put it in your mouth you, you run out the door and you meet the first person you find on the street and you say, "Oh my God, I just had the best (fill in the blank: chocolate, mustard, cheese, whatever) that I've ever had in my life! You have to go try it right now!" That you would run up to strangers and say this to them. I don't know that we succeed one hundred percent of the time, but that's always kind of the goal that we're working toward. That good, that exciting, that from one taste we would have that strong of a reaction.

**Alex:** There are those products where I'm looking for something and they work, but then there are other products where I'm like, "I don't care who you are, I don't care what you're doing, you have to stop and eat this right now because it is so good. It's gonna change your day. It's gonna change your life." If a dried fruit can do that, we have to sell it. I don't care what happens.


**Ari:** Years ago, a student from Community High who used to come to the Next Door for breakfast, Vince, once told me, "You know, sometimes there's a food that's so good you don't want to share it. And then there's a food that's so good you *have* to share it." You just have to tell people about it. You feel compelled.

**Allison:** Piggybacking on what Val said, the mundane or practical things are super important because, at the end of the day, we want to be profitable. That interplay of everything: flavor quality, uniqueness in the marketplace, how attractive I think it's going to be to our customers based upon what they've responded to in the past. We're a young business so that is changing all the time and we've changed locations. And so that makes a difference, too, and cost. I make sure that I take calculated risks with certain products that I know are fantastic. That Sicilian marzipan was actually, initially, a calculated risk as was all of that Scandinavian licorice. Black licorice is not a thing in America... except actually it is with a certain demographic and they will find you if you have it and then you can build on that. I just don't want to underestimate how important having skilled sales staff are to the success of any product that you're selling.

**Lexi:** And then, of course, making sure things come from ethical companies. We put small batch items on our shelves and I think people love asking, "I've never had this before. Where does this come from? How do they make it?" It's wild how poetic, in a good way, everybody in the ZCoB—and our guests in general—are about the ingredients and about each product. It's inspiring. I'm still getting there. I'm still learning. Everybody's been here for like a hundred years, it seems like, and I've just shown up.

**Brad:** I just wanted to mention how much I think the finite space that we have both on our shelves and in our warehouse influences our selection and keeps us really hungry for new stuff. If we had unlimited space, we could keep adding more products and keeping everything for years, but because we have to keep offering the thing that we like the best, that we think is the most compelling, the most flavorful, it keeps us constantly reevaluating our entire selection all the time because we don't have a lot of space and we can't have everything that we want on there. I think that bears mentioning how not having this unlimited area to sell everything we love really keeps us focused and honed in on the things that we really, really like the best and that we want to offer.

**Jennie's new fave**  
**bean-to-bar chocolate from Cuna de Piedra**  
 This is one of my favorite products that we carry (although not that new, now). In particular, I really enjoy their 73% bar using cacao from Tabasco. One of the lines on their website that I love sharing with people and always gets to me is: "We are a group of Mexicans who are passionate about cacao. Our mission is to raise the quality of life of everyone involved in the process, from those who grow and harvest the land to those who consume our bars. Cuna de Piedra is an homage to Mexican cacao."  
**Pick up Cuna de Piedra chocolate bars at the Deli's Next Door Café or online at [shop.zingermansdeli.com](http://shop.zingermansdeli.com).**



**Allison's new fave**  
**chocolate coated cherries from California**  
 Our guests have been requesting chocolate plus cherry flavor combinations from the very start of the Candy Store. So, I set out to find some good representatives, but finding really great ones made from excellent cherries and full-flavored, well-made chocolate has proved to be elusive! Then Dick Taylor, a small craft chocolate maker from Eureka, California that we've been carrying almost since the birth of the candy store, announced they were releasing a chocolate-coated cherry, and they are absolutely wonderful. Plump, tart Michigan cherries coated with multiple layers of their rich, earthy 65% dark chocolate from Belize and then dusted with cocoa powder. They're rich and complex and really show how just a few simple ingredients—when they are high quality—can result in a fantastic flavor experience.  
**Find them at the Candy Store, located inside Zingerman's Coffee Company.**



**Allison:** That's a good tool to have.

**Brad:** You can't have 40 honeys when you don't have that much space.

**Sean:** Oh, I can show you how it's done.

**Allison:** Ha! I just keep taking over the whole café. Just keep creeping around the corner there.

**Ari:** How did you learn to taste?

**Val:** Tasting team. I remember this so clearly. I remember just kind of being in a daze when I started going to tasting team, which is our meeting that we used to have monthly. Now, it's every couple months. This is where we get together to taste all the new products that are sent to us for consideration. We always start with olive oil. I remember being about a year in before I could taste and, before anyone said anything, I could start to say, "This is gonna be one that people like," or, "This is gonna be one that people don't like." It took a year of attending those meetings and hearing everyone speak around me to tune my palate to recognize what it was we were looking for and what it was we weren't looking for. Just being in that group and tasting with people who had a lot of experience. Tasting with all these people who had a lot of practice and just listening. When someone would say, "Oh, this olive oil tastes grassy" or, "This olive oil taste peppery," or "This olive oil taste soapy," evaluating what I was experiencing. Just that repetition of over and over and over again. And I would say with that, too, tasting side-by-side. Not just tasting one olive oil, but tasting three in a row, or tasting 10 in a row, which I don't actually recommend, you get fatigued if you take too many in a row. If you have two, how do you pick between them? The first step is to taste them side-by-side because our memories are imperfect and it's really hard to remember the jam that I tasted last week versus the jam that I'm tasting right now and how they really compare. When you taste them side-by-side it's much easier.

**Allison:** I call my six or seven years working in Deli retail my Specialty Food Graduate School, because you taste and taste and taste and taste and taste, taste, taste... And you go to classes and then you just do it over and over again until you can do that party trick where you can give a guest a taste of olive oil and say, "You're tasting this now, and then you're tasting this, and now the pepper hits." That's really actually super rewarding and fun when


you get to do that. It's the same for all food. It's just practice and being with people who are knowledgeable and then learning from them. Practice and effort, practice and effort.

**Brad:** I learned upstairs at the Deli because I went up to clock out and Ari said, "Come on over. We got some stuff to taste. Do you want to try it?" and I said, "I don't know." And he said, "That's how we're gonna find out." I want to highlight our role now as being really important to still being good at tasting. New faces, new people that just started out in that tasting meeting. Teaching it is what really makes us masters of it. If we keep having new people in and we keep talking about what it is and why we like something to educate them, it keeps reinforcing it on our own minds and our own taste buds, and those of our friends. I don't want to let go of the fact of inviting more people in and teaching them how to taste as being so important to how we taste even now. And how we continue to be good at it and not just rest on our laurels because we're trying to show other people how to do it, too.

**Alex:** I feel like when it comes to tasting and practice, there's a lot to do with the building blocks of flavor. Thinking about citrus, just taking the time when you have lemons and oranges and limes at home to taste and smell those, and be like, how are these different? The things that are hardest for me to taste are just one product, like olive oil or chocolate and how do you pick out those berry notes? How do you refine and explain things better. You can only do that if you have that memory bank of like, how this citrus tastes compared to this citrus. My best notes in tasting team are for products I'm actually not tasting because I ask a lot more questions. I feel like when you are used to tasting it's the sensory experience and my notes devolved to, "This is good. I like this. Thumbs up." When I'm not tasting something, I ask questions about, you know, if it's peanut butter, "What is the texture? Is it chunky? Is it thin, does it coat your mouth? How quickly does it go away? Is it really peanutty? Is it really sweet?" Even if you're in a room not tasting something, it kind of makes you a better investigator if you're really trying to get that experience without having it yourself. There are a lot of different ways to learn how to describe things.

**Sean:** For me, tasting is very personal. It's different from eating. And so sometimes, good food is light-hearted and I've turned that taste-tester off and it increases enjoyment, and sometimes when I'm very focused it is a fatiguing process. It's enjoyable. But that's part of the work—the personal work behind the group dynamic.

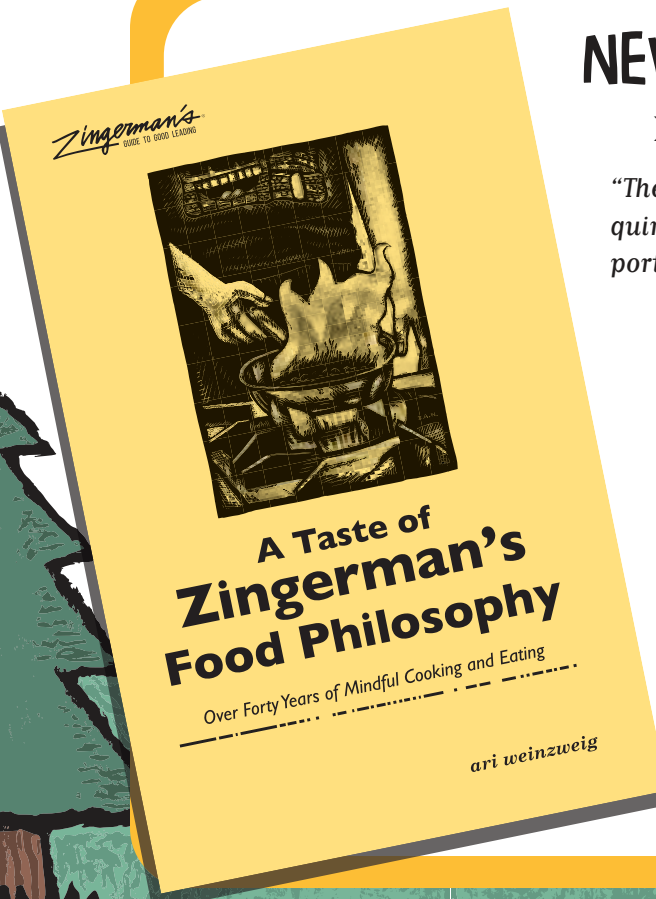

**Lexi's new fave**  
**SuperZingerman Gelato from Zingerman's Creamery**  
 I'm so excited that after a full year of testing and hard work, this gelato has finally made its debut in pints to take home! I can imagine that kids and nostalgic adults who love the classic Midwestern flavor named for a superhero will enjoy our take on it. (Bonus: ours doesn't have any artificial flavors or dyes!) It has a unique flavor combination—raspberry, lemon, almond, and vanilla—sure to spark joy and curiosity in many. Each hand-scooped pint has such a uniqueness to it that no large manufacturing company can create. A lot of love and labor is placed into this product and the guests will really taste the difference.  
**SuperZingerman Gelato is available at the Creamery's Cream Top Shop as a scoop from their dipping case and in pints and quarts to take home.**



**NEW PAMPHLET FROM ZINGERMAN'S PRESS**  
 Newly arrived as part of our 41st anniversary celebration!

*"The essence of Ari's philosophy is simple: It's possible to care. Not only possible, it's required. If you want to do work that matters, work that is not convenient or easy, but important, then go do it. We need you."* — Seth Godin, Author, *The Song of Significance*

**A Taste of Zingerman's Food Philosophy**  
 Over Forty Years of Mindful Cooking and Eating  
 ari weinzeig

you really can taste the difference

Zingerman's Creamery crafts handmade full-flavored gelati using traditional methods. We source the highest quality milk from small-scale regional farmers, add in the best ingredients we can find, and churn small batches every day. The result is gelato with a rich texture and delicious, intense flavor. You can pick up a pint or a quart to enjoy at home or savor a scoop on the spot. That's not the only way to savor the smooth taste of summer though, the Creamery crew is mixing up gelato and sorbet in a myriad of ways, one of which is sure to satisfy your sweet tooth:



### frozen cooler:

Any flavor in the case, blended with any soda. Try our spin on a Detroit classic float, the Boston Cooler, and blend Vanilla gelato with ginger ale.

### cold brew shake:

Vanilla gelato blended with Zingerman's Coffee Company Cold Brew.

### zing chill:

Vanilla gelato blended with your choice of topping like Zingerman Candy Manufactory Peanut Butter Crush candy bar pieces.

### Gelato cakes:

Layers of our gelato with Zingerman's Bakehouse cake, whole or by the slice—and now available to order online for pickup! Choose from Milk & Cookies, Triple Chocolate, or Zzang!® Bar.

### shake or malt:

Any flavor in the case, hand-spun with milk. Can't decide? Dark Chocolate is the runaway guest favorite!

### frozen half & half:

Lemon sorbet blended with freshly brewed iced tea.

### float:

Choose any soda to top off your favorite gelato. Keep it traditional with root beer, or mix it up with Redpop!

The Creamery's retail store, the Cream Top Shop, is located on Plaza Drive on Ann Arbor's Southside, tucked in between Zingerman's Bakehouse and Zingerman's Coffee Company.



3723 Plaza Dr. Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.761.7255 | bakewithzing.com



3711 Plaza Dr. Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.761.2095 | zingermansbakehouse.com



422 Detroit St. Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
734.663.3400 | zingermanscatering.com



3723 Plaza Dr. #5  
(inside Coffee Co.) Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.619.6666 | zingermanscandy.com



3723 Plaza Dr. #5 Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.929.6060 | zingermanscoffee.com



8540 Island Lake Rd. Dexter, MI 48130  
734-619-8100 | cornmanfarms.com



3723 Plaza Dr. #2 Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.929.0500 | zingermanscreamery.com



422 Detroit St. Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
734.663.3354 | zingermansdeli.com



620 Phoenix Dr. Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
888.316.2736 | zingermansfoodtours.com



100 N Ashley St. Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
734.230.2300 | zingermansgreyline.com



610 Phoenix Dr. Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
888.636.8162 | zingermans.com



415 N. Fifth Ave. Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734.275.0099 | misskimannarbor.com



418 Detroit St. Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734.663.5282 | zingermansdeli.com



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3728 Plaza Dr. Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.930.1919 | zingtrain.com