

HOW TO SHOP

1. If you're going to be getting food from the bulk containers, please wash your hands first. There's a sink at the back of the shop. PLEASE DO NOT USE YOUR HANDS TO GET FOOD FROM CONTAINERS; use the scoops and tongs provided.

2. Alfalfa House encourages shoppers to bring their own containers when they shop, although there are recycled paper bags and new glass jars for sale. There are some donated containers below the sink at the rear of the shop. The co-op does accept some clean pre-loved containers, but shoppers are urged to only use them for non-food products. If you do use them for food, you do so at your own risk.

3. Weigh your jars, bottles and bags before you fill them. (If you're buying expensive products and you're putting them in a paper bag, weigh the paper bag as well. It does add up.) There are a number of sets of scales in the shop. Please be considerate of others shopping at the till when weighing containers. There's a marker pen next to each of the scales to write the weight of the empty container on the jar or bottle.

4. Next, do your shopping. Only come to the till when you've finished and are ready to pay. Please avoid doing more shopping while it's being processed, especially if there's a queue. If there's no one else wanting to shop, no problem. Use your discernment. *Please remember to tighten the lids on jars after you've got what you've wanted.* Loose lids allow weevils in (or out to get into other jars). And *please refrain from grazing or nibbling as you shop*, because every little nibble adds up and it's also a health hazard.

5. TROUBLESHOOTING

- No scoop? There's a box, next to the scales, at the rear of the shop that has clean ladles, scoops, tongs and funnels you can use.
- Can't get the liquid out of a dispenser? To help, there's a pump you can attach to the top of the dispenser. That should increase the flow. If you're having trouble ask a staff member. By the way, please keep an eye on the product flowing into your container; there have been minor floods over the years due to shoppers walking away to do other shopping and then forgetting about the container.
- A product has run out or is very low? Let the staff member know and they or a volunteer may be able to look for more in the storeroom. Or if you have done volunteer shifts, you can look yourself. The co-op aims to keep bins close to full at all times. Occasionally products will be out of stock due to seasonal variation, shortages, weather or our suppliers may be out of stock as well. Visit the PRODUCTS page of the website for updates.
- What if I spill something? Ask a Shop Coordinator to fetch a cloth or mop from the storeroom.

6. When you are ready for the till, show your membership card or remember the number. And please be considerate of the person working on the till. The co-op is continuing to improve shopping times, but not everything happens at once.

7. The co-op accepts cash, EFTPOS and Visa and Mastercard.

TRADING HOURS

MONDAY	10.30am-7pm
TUESDAY	10.30am-7pm
WEDNESDAY	10.30am-7pm
THURSDAY	10.30am-7pm
FRIDAY	10.30am-7pm
SATURDAY	10am-6pm
SUNDAY	10am-6pm

STAFF+VOLUNTEERS

There are a number of paid part-time coordinators and a store manager to oversee the day-to-day running of the shop. They look after stock purchasing, operations, administration and cleaning. There are also a number of paid Shop Coordinators who operate the till and manage the shop. They are supported by a team of volunteers, drawn from the membership, who help with the shop's day-to-day running as well as helping with customer needs. If you'd like to volunteer, the co-op welcomes and encourages you – from a regular shift to simply helping fellow shoppers refill an empty bin.

MORE INFO

WEB alfalfahouse.org
TEL. 9519 3374
ADDRESS 113 Enmore Road
Enmore 2042

THE BASICS

AN INTRODUCTION TO ALFALFA HOUSE

COMMUNITY FOOD COOPERATIVE LIMITED



WHAT IS A COOPERATIVE?

The official definition is an “autonomous association of people who come together voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise”. A co-op relies on members participating in the running of the organisation, that is, having a say – making sure criticism is constructive and that members are prepared to join in helping resolve any problems that arise. Co-ops also use capital or funds for mutual rather than individual benefit. While its activities may be commercial, a co-op exists primarily to serve the needs of its members and the community, rather than investing capital or making money. In other words, a co-op is its members. Co-ops are also based on the values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

Alfalfa House is a not-for-profit consumer cooperative, that is, a co-op that retails consumer goods to its members. Our main aim is to provide minimally packaged and minimally processed, affordable, wholesome, organic food to our members and the community as a whole.

HOW DO I JOIN?

If, after reading this infosheet, you like what you’ve read, complete the member application form and together with your Annual Subscription fee of \$20 (cash or EFTPOS/credit card only), give it to a staff member. A membership card and a receipt will be left at the till for you to collect. Staff are happy to answer any queries. Also check out the website. Once your application has been processed, your details will be entered in the database and you can start shopping at the discount rate.

To maintain your membership you must pay an annual subscription fee each calendar year.

Going away?

If you’re going away for between 12 months and five years, we can suspend your membership until you return. You can keep your existing member number and then pay the annual fee for that year when you return. Apply in writing to info@alfalfahouse.org.

What if you want to resign?

If you decide to resign, simply email info@alfalfahouse.org. Include your name, membership number and why you’re resigning. While other members of your household may shop on your card and receive the discount and also help volunteer for the extra discount, the person’s name on the membership card is the member. Therefore, if you move house, the rights of membership moves with you and can only apply to those in your current household.



**ALFALFA
HOUSE**
COMMUNITY FOOD CO-OP • SINCE 1981

ALFALFA'S OBJECTIVES

A to provide a retail source of wholefoods so that members may have some control over the sources of their food supply;

B to provide information on and promote the use of:

- low-cost, ethically-produced and packaged wholefoods;
- cruelty-free foods;
- vegetarian foods;
- vegan foods;
- organic foods and
- genetically modified-free foods;

C to run an ethical, not-for-profit business;

D to minimise resource wastage and, hence, encourage reuse and recycling;

E to support other cooperatives whose objectives are similar or related to the objectives of the cooperative; and

F to stimulate community development, foster community spirit and promote sustainable living.

■ Please show your membership card when you shop.

LOST CARDS. If you lose your card, ask a Shop Coordinator to leave a note with your name and membership number, and we'll organise a replacement for you to collect.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS. If you change address, phone number/s and email address or household members, email them to info@alfalfahouse.org.

SURPLUS. Any surplus the co-op makes is used to reduce prices and improve services to members. The beauty of the cooperative system is that the more you shop, the cheaper the goods become; and the cheaper the goods are, the more people will shop at the co-op!

THE DISCOUNTS

Members receive the Basic Discount (10%) every time they shop. A bigger discount is available if you help run the co-op. Each two hours you volunteer in the co-op entitles you to a single unlimited 25% discount shop, also known as the Casual Extra Discount (XD). (To make the most of the discount, it's smart to save the 25% discount for a big shop rather than use it to buy a few items.) There are various kinds of jobs you can do, including shop maintenance and refurbishing; data entry; restocking; storeroom maintenance; recycling and waste minimisation; helping make decisions at meetings; product research. Some people choose to do their two hours and then shop on the XD. But you can use it later. When you want to use a casual XD, let staff know when you're at the till so they can apply the extra discount. (The number of XD shops you have appears on the transaction page when you shop; one is automatically deducted when you shop.)

You can also earn a Permanent XD (25%) every time you shop – even if you shop ten times a week. To get this, you need to commit to volunteering two hours a week or four hours a fortnight and you must do this each week or fortnight. If you do more than this, you can accumulate XDs for single use if you decide you no longer want to volunteer or just you want a break from volunteering.

When you've done your volunteer shift, ask for the XD folder so you can record your shift; it is later updated in the database.

OTHER DISCOUNTERS

While Alfalfa House has a policy of giving the basic discount (10%) to members of any food co-op in the world, not all food co-ops reciprocate. But ask anyway. Co-ops in the Sydney region that do reciprocate are Thoughtful Foods (Uni of NSW), Sydney Uni, UTS, Manly (21b Whistler Street, Manly), Green Tucker Store (51 Arthur Street Forestville), the Blue Mountains (Halfpenny Arcade, Katoomba). There are also food co-ops in Thirroul, Melbourne, Cairns, Darwin, Canberra.

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP

While your membership card is in your name, you can let other members of your household shop on your card and to get your discount. If you decide to allow them to use your card, it's best if they bring the card along when they shop or at least remember the number or whose name is on the card. You should also familiarise them as to how the co-op works: ask them to read this infosheet or show them around the co-op. If you are on the casual or permanent XD, they can also help do the voluntary work. You could bring them along with you when you are volunteering and divide the work time required to get the XD.

PRODUCTS

Alfalfa House stocks a surprisingly wide range of foods, including such staples as dried fruit, nuts, seeds, grains, rices, beans, sourdough breads, dried herbs and spices, teas and coffees, oils, plus lots of refrigerated goods such as tofu and tempeh, as well as pastas, macrobiotic lines, sea vegetables, soy and rice milk, juices, chocolate and a seasonal range of fresh fruit, vegetables, herbs and spices. We also stock a range of laundry and cleaning products as well as personal care items such as soaps, toothpaste, eco toothbrushes. There's a full list on the website. Most of what we sell is unpackaged. Ideally, you bring your own containers and scoop, pour or ladle out the exact amount you want. You only buy what you need – the price per kilo is the same whether you buy five grams or five kilos! Like many other food co-ops, Alfalfa House takes a leading role in promoting commercial waste minimisation and avoidance. We aim to reduce waste by buying wholesale goods in bulk and encouraging members to bring-their-own packaging. We encourage reuse by returning bulk packaging (such as boxes, drums and crates) to suppliers. Finally, we recycle and compost wherever possible, and encourage all members to do the same.



BULK ORDERS

You can order food in bulk (in the minimum weight or quantity the co-op buys the product in) and receive an extra 5% discount on top of any other discount to which you are entitled. If it's not a regular co-op product, we may still be able to get it for you. Talk to a staff member.

We aim to supply ethically and environmentally sound products; we're concerned for who produces the goods, under what conditions and by what methods. Because of the damaging environmental and health effects of contemporary food production, we prefer to stock goods produced by organic or biodynamic methods and by other co-ops. As much as possible we buy from local suppliers and all our organic and biodynamic groceries are certified. Sometimes, members bring in excess produce they've grown without chemicals in their home gardens; they are clearly labelled as such. All fruit+veg is Australian and certified organic or biodynamic unless otherwise stated; some produce is uncertified organically-grown Farmer-Direct and is labelled as such.

When the scientific community is divided over the safety of a product or ingredient, the co-op has a policy of not buying that product or ingredient. For instance, we don't stock products that contain sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS), the foaming agent in many soaps, shampoos, laundry and dishwashing liquids, and toothpastes. We are also concerned that our products are processed ethically. For instance, up until March 2003, the co-op didn't stock cashews because we couldn't be certain they were processed without causing injury to the people who work in the processing factories. We now have a supply of organic cashews that have been processed ethically.

The co-op relies on its members to suggest new products. If you think the co-op should get a new product, bring the label and supplier's name and contact details to the Stock Coordinators. If your product fits with co-op policy, and we have the shelf space, we can stock it. We are constantly refining our stock to replace any remaining not-organically grown and distant imported products with their organic, unpackaged, locally-sourced equivalent.

HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE?

Alfalfa House encourages its members to be directly involved in deciding co-op policy. Members can attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and any special general meetings as well as the monthly Members' Council (MC) meetings. All members can raise proposals and vote at the general meetings. However, while any member can attend and speak at MC meetings, only the MC can propose and vote. The council, which comprises between four and seven members elected at the AGM, oversees the co-op's financial management and ongoing policy-making. It meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month from 7pm. There is also a monthly newsletter that you can have emailed to you; it can also be viewed on the website. As well, all bookkeeping and accounting processes are freely available for member scrutiny, as is the co-op's constitution, which can be downloaded from the WHO ARE WE? page on the website.