

Producer OF THE *Month*

JANUARY 2022



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer OF THE Month

by Jon Megas-Russell

ZENBARN FARM

Photos courtesy of Zenbarn Farms.



Noah and Marlena Fishman



As people turn the calendar to 2022, creating or reinvigorating healthy habits could be on the to-do list. Some might try a new exercise regimen at the gym or a winter snow sport in order to get outside in the brisk cold. Others might limit dairy or maybe try out meatless Mondays. The new year can bring a new you and ultimately some fun adventures into health and wellness. In order to assist in whatever wellness regime you may undertake, our Wellness team stocks herbs, teas, multivitamins, probiotics, and a plethora of supplements you might need. One of the new botanicals that people turn to is the hemp plant, which when dried and extracted offers the cannabinoid CBD. Note that the hemp plant and

its subsequently extracted CBD oil does not contain the cannabinoid from cannabis called THC that can make you “high.” The good news is that CBD may support focus, calm, and even rest. Here at the Co-op we stock many different local and national varieties of CBD tinctures, capsules, and salves. One of our favorites is from Zenbarn Farms out of Waterbury Center, VT, which is founded, owned, and operated by Marlena and Noah Fishman.

Zenbarn Farms has created a business to support positive progress around the hemp, cannabis, and CBD industry in Vermont and across the nation, all while offering the nourishing benefits of this botanical. Much of their work is inspired by Marlena’s experience of having grown up in a world where people she loves were

criminalized for involvement with cannabis merely because of their skin color. Creating Zenbarn Farms builds on her passion for cannabis and hemp, her personal mission to end the stigma around it, and to create equity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) business owners. As she stated, Zenbarn Farms is all about “feeling good and doing good.” Additionally, Marlena and Noah are creating BIPOC training programs where people can learn all the aspects of the cannabis industry, from seed to store, in order to support prosperity, social justice, and a safe place for BIPOC entrepreneurs to flourish. These goals are now being piloted at Zenbarn Farms and will take shape permanently through their line of oils and salves (sold at the Brattleboro Food



Co-op) and their work with the Pennywise Foundation to create the Cannabis Equity Fund.

The basis of becoming farmers and entrepreneurs started many years ago, back when they met and lived in Columbia Heights, in Washington, DC. Hosting artists, unhoused folk, politicians, close friends, and people from all walks of life through music and food allowed them to forge connections within their community. As these networks grew, they began to experience their neighborhood's amazing urban gardens filled with fruits and veggies. Inspiration was all around them and enabled them to really feel into who they wanted to be as people. Gardening, music, and food combined with their background in education was taking shape as their future. While they thrived in DC and felt love for their community, having children and getting back to the earth was calling their name. For these reasons they wanted to be closer to family and they chose to move to Vermont where Noah had been raised.

Upon landing in Vermont 14 years ago, they raised children



and began to work on family land with local farmers to learn how to cultivate the earth and grow food organically. They felt a satisfaction as they became grounded in their new community and the land. Their vegetable gardens proliferated and energized them to revitalize the old

dairy barn next to the farm. They renovated the space into something that was functional and had soul, as a restaurant, yoga studio, and event space was born. The restaurant was named the Zenbarn restaurant and cultivated an amazing local and food-centric menu. Slowly they built a healing space for yoga and artists began to enjoy playing at their venue. As people visited and enjoyed this space, it became a place for people to create longevity for their soul. Then in 2017, hemp became legal to grow and they transitioned from growing veggies to growing hemp. One of their first endeavors with hemp was to incorporate it into the menu and to become one of the first restaurants in the state of Vermont to create food and drink infused with CBD. These offerings received rave reviews and Zenbarn restaurant and venue became a destination. Since then, they have continued to grow hemp and their knowledge of this plant has evolved. In 2020 they launched their CBD products under the name Zenbarn Farms, and this year alone, they grew and harvested 700 CBD plants.



Connecting with the land is extremely important to Marlena, especially in the summer mornings when she can walk outside and feel the dew on her feet. During the summer months she often plays music with Shawn, one of her colleagues at Zenbarn Farms, to their hemp plants. Their farming focuses on the utilization of organic practices to grow all of their hemp plants. They seek to create fertile land by rotating where they plant their hemp and building soil through organic compost that is created from the food scraps in their restaurant. During the growing season, they rely on support from the BIPOC community in Vermont and beyond to execute the work that goes on during the planting, growing, and harvesting process.

The cannabis industry has a long history of oppressing BIPOC folx, which continues to this day, by intentionally creating economic, societal, and legal barriers, in addition to BIPOC being unjustly stigmatized and disproportionately persecuted for the use of cannabis. Moving forward, the cannabis industry and society at large must create equity, reparations, job training, and opportunities for BIPOC folx to lead. Access to training and working in the cannabis industry is exactly why Marlena and Noah created the Cannabis Equity Fund. Marlena dreams of supporting talented people to gain access to this industry in areas such as marketing or photography. She also wants to cultivate a cohort that live and work in Vermont to learn every aspect of the industry, from the elements of farming, planting seeds, and supporting the plant's growth through to harvest and the extraction of oil. Then of course there is the training and knowledge that must be acquired within the legal realm. BIPOC folx will require proper representation to launch and maintain a farm and

business in a highly regulated, biased, and expensive industry. To complete the learning process, they will need to gain knowledge in marketing, packaging, and sales. This is a pivotal piece of the puzzle in bringing products to dispensaries for sale to ensure that this botanical can reach people in need of its benefits. The Cannabis Equity Fund will also offer mentorship beyond the program to provide ongoing resources to thrive. Zenbarn Farms is seeking to do more than just be known for producing high quality CBD products—they want to be a support system for an ever-growing industry, one that can be led by BIPOC folx.

Zenbarn Farms takes much care in growing their hemp plants and creating their products. After their hemp is harvested and dried, a locally owned lab in Morrisville, VT, processes all of the plants into a high quality organic CBD oil that meets all current industry standards. All of their products are third-party tested for potency and vetted so you know what you're getting and can feel safe. In addition, Vermont Soap Co. also helps create their topical salves such as Wolf Balm. Wolf Balm combines CBN—another cannabinoid—with arnica and other complimentary herbs such as St. John's wort, peppermint, and rosemary. This is a wonderful product that can be used for joint and muscle fatigue. They suggest applying it during your warm-up before exercise or to ease tension after working out. They also offer a full line of tinctures that blend their CBD oil with other botanicals, and they work closely with the Morrisville lab to create these offerings. One that is highly regarded by our own Wellness manager Chris is the "Daily Zen Focus," which contains CBD and cannabigerol (CBG) along with hemp-based terpenes, offered in a lemon flavor. This product in particular is, they

state, ideal for "focus, sustained energy, and concentration."

Stop by our Wellness department next time you are shopping to check out Zenbarn Farms' CBD products.

Please also learn more and donate to the Cannabis Equity Fund at <https://www.pennywisefoundation.org/zenbarn-farms-cannabis-equity-fund.html>



We'll be giving away **one Zenbarn Farms product** to one lucky person. Must be 18+ to enter.

We are taking online entries from January 1–10.

Read our online **Producer of the Month** article for **Zenbarn Farms**, click the link at the end of the article, and enter to win!

