

# Producer OF THE *Month*

APRIL 2022

NEW  
ENGLAND



# NATURALS<sup>®</sup>

100% EMPLOYEE OWNED



Greenfield, MA



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

# Producer <sup>OF</sup> THE *Month*

by Jon Megas-Russell

NEW  
ENGLAND

NATURALS<sup>®</sup>

100% EMPLOYEE OWNED

Just south of the border in Greenfield, MA, New England Naturals has been a pioneer in granola since 1977. Their granola was first baked in pizza ovens and some of the original recipes are still being produced today. The mission of NEN is a commitment to the values of trust, integrity, excellence, and sustainability. Being an employee-owned organization allows their staff to be deeply invested in their work and ensures that a high quality product is produced each and every day—all while having stock in the company. They are seeking to grow their distribution across the country with a continued push towards healthy ingredients and delicious flavors.

John Broucek began the journey of baking granola back in the '70s when he started to experiment in a pizza oven with recipes inspired by his passion for healthy food. John was the owner of NEN until 2012 when he introduced an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) and sold the business to its employees. John is still involved with NEN, serving as chairman of the Board of Directors. An ESOP allows for a unique profit-sharing model. It also enables folx

to have a deeper understanding of the business while having a hand in making it successful—with the incentive of owning stock in the company. During the pandemic NEN struggled to properly staff their organization. As the pandemic progressed, many folx found the employee-owned model to be attractive, which turned out to be helpful in bringing people on board. NEN takes deep pride in great benefits, transparency,

obtainable goals, accountability, trust, and good communication. Of course, showing appreciation for staff has long been a goal of this company and continues to be a guiding principle.

New England Naturals granola offers high quality granola, trail mixes, and muesli at an affordable price. We currently stock two granolas and one snack mix in our Bulk department. We thoroughly



Maple Almond Date Granola



Save the Forest Nut Granola

enjoy being able to offer local bulk granola that can cut packaging waste and can entice folks to bring their own containers to fill. The first offering is “Save the Forest Nut” granola, which is both sweet and savory with a delicious mix of Brazil nuts, cashews, honey, coconut, oats, whey powder, and some cinnamon. It’s not too sweet and is great with milk or yogurt or even as a topping on ice cream. The other granola is “Maple Almond Date,” which features dates, granola, oats, almonds, and maple syrup. Of the two the latter is my favorite, with a delicious hint of maple that goes well with the almonds and is a lovely addition to your snack routine, any time of day. Both of these granolas are Kosher certified and they

have a commitment to non-GMO ingredients. The last offering is their “Magical Mystery Mix,” which is a fantastic trail mix that brings together raisins, chocolate, peanuts, cashews, and yogurt raisins—all without any added salt or wheat. This is a classic flavor mix and one that many people have enjoyed in bulk here at the Co-op. Bring your own container and try one of their delicious offerings on your next shopping trip.

All of their granola is handmade in small batches executed in a facility that takes deep care in cleaning, attention, and food safety to offer the highest quality product possible. A masterfully run facility allows for these goals to be accomplished. A

commitment to the USDA organic certification has been a huge deal to NEN in offering clean ingredients that support a healthy earth and delicious products. Their organic granolas are also available via pre-order here at the Co-op. In addition to being Kosher certified and utilizing non-GMO ingredients, another key differentiator is their rotary ovens, which offer a unique baked-in flavor that larger facilities struggle to offer. Additionally, all of their baking is done in small batches by hand, allowing them to guarantee freshness and quality. As they seek to diversify their product offerings, new formulations will be key to their success, and following both industry trends and customer feedback will be essential. They store granola at an offsite



Magical Mystery Mix

distribution warehouse in Turners Falls, MA. This allows for their distributors such as United Natural Foods, Kahey, and others to pick up products at a convenient location. They even directly ship to customers and their products can be found in many areas around the east coast.

With a yearning to continue their status as a pioneer in the granola industry, they are seeking to remove all plastic packaging from their process. It's a monumental and challenging goal but one they are up for working towards. By purchasing their products in Bulk you can be a part of the solution. They also recently piloted compostable bags for some of their packaged granolas, and they are optimistic that with widespread appeal, this could be an innovation

for the industry. Reduction of food waste is also a major goal, and NEN continues to refine their production process to minimize food waste. When granola or ingredients are unable to be consumed, they package things up and deliver it to Vanguard Renewables in Wellesley, MA. This organization has a program called "Farm Powered" that turns food waste into renewable energy and low-carbon fertilizer for farms through anaerobic digestion. Lastly, on a yearly basis NEN donates thousands of dollars of granola to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, among other non-profits who support those in need of food. Stop in the Bulk department with your own container on your next shopping trip and give these delicious granolas or trail mix a try.



We'll be giving away **two pounds of bulk granola from New England Naturals** to one lucky person.

**We are taking online entries from April 1-10.**

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