

How to Apply to the Purple Porch Co-op

1. Download an application to become a member by visiting www.purpleporchcoop.com. You need to also download a copy of the questionnaire concerning your production methods and other questions about your product and farm or business. These guidelines are also available at this site. You may also call (574) 233-1055 to request these documents.
2. ~~A \$35 producer membership fee must accompany your application. Cash or checks payable to "Purple Porch Cooperative" are accepted. Producer members of the Co-op are expected to abide by all of the terms and conditions as stated on the application.~~
3. Your membership application must include a working phone number.
4. If any licenses or certificates are required for your product from the ISDA, MDA or USDA, please include these documents with your application. We must receive a copy of those documents before reviewing your application.
5. Mail to or drop off all application materials to Greg Koehler, 945 S. 21st St., South Bend, IN 46615. Please do not send correspondence to the distribution site.
6. Your application will be forwarded to the Co-op's Producer Relations Committee, which will review your application and contact you with any questions. The committee may ask for more information and may visit your farm or business before approving your application.
7. Producer members of the Co-op must follow all of the Co-op procedures as listed below.
8. The approval process can take up to 4 weeks to complete. If you are not accepted as a producer, we will promptly refund your producer membership fee.

General Producer Guidelines & Procedures

1. Only members of the Purple Porch Cooperative may buy or sell through our on-line marketplace.
2. Acting as the agent of producer members, the Co-op maintains a website and publicizes the products its producer members have for sale within its marketplace of customer members. We receive orders, provide a way for products to be distributed to members of the Co-op, collect payment from the customers and forward the payments to the producers.
3. Acting as the agent for customer members, the Co-op provides them an online catalog of available local food products that includes information about how and where the product was grown or processed. We receive their orders and notify the appropriate producers, arrange for the food to be dropped off and checked in at a central location, receive and process their payments. For both producer and customer members, we provide a basic screening of products and producers based on our published parameters, and education regarding the use and the advantages of local foods and the core values of the Co-op.

4. We have a weekly order/delivery cycle from May through October; the cycle slows to twice a month during the months of November through April. This cycle is designed to accommodate the widest diversity of products available, including more perishable products such as fresh produce, that are available in the warmer months. The Co-op may adjust this cycle as needed based on supply and demand of products.
5. The essential business of the Co-op is to provide an internet marketplace where willing buyers and sellers who are members of the Co-op can meet. At no time does the Co-op ever have title to any of the products. We have no inventory. The products that go through our distribution system are owned either by the producer, or by the customer who purchases "title" to the product from the producer. All complaints should first be brought to the attention of the producer, unless it is a situation where the Co-op itself is at fault (a Co-op volunteer drops a dozen eggs while helping unload them, for example). If a successful resolution can not be found by the affected producer and customer members, the Co-op's arbitration procedure may be invoked.
6. The business of the Co-op operates via the internet. When you join the Co-op, you will be assigned a username and password so you can access the members-only pages of our website. Internet users will need to keep track of their username and password. Producer members will be responsible for updating the website with new product information and availability, as well as monitoring the orders received by customers. The Co-op will provide internet training and offer ongoing tech support to Producers. ***Producers without internet access are encouraged to establish relationships with individuals that have reliable internet access. Please contact the Co-op if you have difficulty making your own arrangements.***
7. Producers set their own prices and receive the full retail price they set for their products, less the Co-op's handling fee for producers (presently set at 4%). The charges the Co-op makes for its services are always under review in consideration of our expenses. The Co-op is not in a position to lose money on its operations, so the financial structure of the Co-op may be changed from time to time.
8. A future goal of the Co-op is to advance payment to Producers for their products at the time they are delivered on Distribution Day (unless there is an unresolved discrepancy in the amount you should be paid) when the Co-op has the working capital to do this. As of this writing, however, payment to producers is made within 10 business days after receipt of payment from the customer members. Producers will only be paid for products ordered by customers. The Co-op reserves the right to refuse to accept delivery of products that are not what customers ordered, or which are spoiled or contaminated or otherwise not acceptable. The Co-op does not maintain any inventory of goods to be sold.
9. Any customer complaints or requests for refunds or return of merchandise will be referred directly to the responsible producer. Each producer will provide us a written statement of their policies for returns (included in Producer questionnaire). In the event of an unresolved dispute between a customer and a producer, the matter shall be referred to an arbitration committee.
10. These procedures are established to benefit the common good of the Co-op's members. The more members we have, the more critical it is that we achieve 100% compliance with these procedures. At present and for the foreseeable future, the Co-op administration and management personnel are all volunteers. By following these procedures, we minimize the demands on any individual volunteer's time. This is necessary for the long-term sustainability of this business enterprise.

Products that may be Sold through the Purple Porch Co-op

1. Produce, meat and processed food products sold by Co-op producers must have been produced within a 60-mile radius of South Bend, Indiana. (Exceptions for products produced in the region but outside of this radius will be considered on a case-by-case basis).
2. A producer may sell products through the Co-op they haven't produced themselves as long as these products are produced within the 60-mile radius. Each farm or business that produces these products, however, must submit an application, complete the questionnaire, and pay the annual membership fee.
3. In rare cases, the Cooperative will accept food products of interest to members that are not produced within 60 miles or the neighboring region if similar products are not currently available. This includes products that have the potential to be produced in the region but presently are not, such as spelt, as well as products that likely will not be produced in the region, such as coffee. These products will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If at any time these products become available in the region, the similar non-regional products will be removed from the Cooperative's marketplace.
4. Producers selling non-food items will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is possible that a non-food item such as recyclable batteries being produced within the 60-mile radius could be considered for sale through the Co-op if its value to the local food system and community is deemed worthwhile.
5. Producers are required to list all ingredients in their products on the Co-op website in the product description and estimate the percentage of locally grown ingredients in the item. If a processed product contains ingredients produced by fellow Co-op members, please detail this.
6. Genetically modified foods and products are strongly discouraged and must be noted as such in the product description.
7. Absolutely **NO** meat, poultry or egg products from Confined (or Concentrated) Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) may be sold through the Co-op, nor may they be used as ingredients in processed foods. Confined feeding is the raising of animals in lots, pens, ponds, sheds or buildings, where they are confined, fed and maintained for at least 45 days during any year, and where there is no ground cover or vegetation present over at least half of the animals' confinement area. Our assumption is that such products available in supermarkets originate in CAFOs so meat, poultry, or egg products used as ingredients in processed or prepared foods should be sourced from other distributors, preferably local farms.
8. No meat, poultry or egg products may contain artificial bovine growth hormone nor may routine antibiotics be used in feeds.
9. All red meats to be sold through the Co-op must be processed in a USDA plant and the USDA stamp must be clearly visible on the product, not covered by the producer's or any other label. Meats processed by custom butchers, whose packages are stamped "Not for Sale", may not be delivered by the Co-op. All poultry and eggs must be processed in a MDA- or ISDA-licensed facility. A copy of any applicable licenses must be on file at the Co-op. If a producer uses a certified kitchen to create product, the Co-op must have a copy of that certificate on file.

10. All new or changed products from existing producer members must be reviewed by the Producer Committee to ensure they are eligible for sale through the Co-op. To review your new product(s), this information is required:
 - a. A statement regarding the geographic location of your product(s) and that you are the grower or producer. In the statement, the producer must give the exact location(s) where the crop(s) were grown, animals were raised, or processed product was prepared.
 - b. A statement regarding your production practices for this product. Please use the application questionnaire as a guide.
 - c. The information regarding new or changed products must be sent by e-mail to help@purpleporchcoop.com.
 - d. Once the product is approved, follow the procedure described below to actually list your product in our database for access by our members. Getting the product approved, and then having it appear in our database of currently available products are two different steps.
11. To protect the integrity of our marketing system, the Co-op reserves the right to verify the production claims and geographic production location of everything sold through our marketplace.
12. Each producer has a page on our website where producers can introduce themselves and tell the story of their farming operations and/or food processing methods. Each of the producer's products and the corresponding prices will be listed on the website; customer members will be able to view available products sorted by producer or product category. New and updated products will be highlighted on the main page of the website.
13. Producer members must comply with any relevant health codes or agricultural laws regarding direct sales of farm and food products.

Procedure for Listing Your Products on *www.purpleporchcoop.com*

1. To offer your product for sale through the Co-op, we need to know everything a customer needs to know in order to make an informed decision about your product. As you enter products on-line, you will be prompted for the following relevant information:
 - a. Name of the product.
 - b. Basic description of the product. If the approximate size, weight or contents are not clear from the name of the product, list those details here. If it is a processed item, include a list of the ingredients and estimate the percentage of locally grown ingredients in the item. If the product is Certified Organic, this should be noted.
 - c. Category or subcategory under which it should be listed. If we do not have an existing category and/or subcategory that fits your product, please give us some guidance on how the product would be categorized.
 - d. If it is a package of several items, the approximate (or exact, whichever the case may be) number of items in the package should be listed.

- e. The price, the pricing unit (e.g. whatever comes after the “per” in \$ per ____), and the ordering unit (when the customer orders, they will order number of ____). Also, we need to know if the item has a random weight, i.e. the customer will not know the price until you provide a weight for it after the item is ordered.

EXAMPLE 1: You are selling a 5 pound bag of wheat for \$10.00. The price is \$10.00. The pricing unit is “5 pound bag” (because you are selling at \$10.00 per 5 pound bag). The ordering unit is also “5 pound bag” because the customer orders by the number of 5 pound bags that they wish to buy. This item is not considered random weight because the bags always weigh the same and the customer knows the final price when it is ordered. Notice in this example that even though the flour ends up costing \$2 per pound, you would not list it as \$2 per pound because you are only selling 5 pound bags that cost \$10.

EXAMPLE 2: You are selling a package of ground beef. The package weights range between .75 and 1.25 pounds and you sell the meat at \$4 per pound. The price depends on the weight, but you want the customer to order the number of bags, not the number of pounds, because you do not package it in exactly 1 pound bags. In this case, your price would be \$4, your pricing unit would be “pound”, and your ordering unit would be “bag”. This is a random weight product because the price cannot be pre-determined by the customer. It can only be determined after you (the producer) enter the weight.

EXAMPLE 3: You are selling packages of chicken breasts, and the package varies in weight from a little under 2 pounds to a little over 2 pounds. However, you always charge the same price per package (\$6.00). In this case, price is \$6.00, the pricing unit is “package”, and the ordering unit is package. This is not a random weight product because the customer knows the price in advance.

EXAMPLE 4: You are selling tomatoes at \$3.00 per pound. The customer can order by the pound. If the customer orders 3 pounds, you have decided that you will always provide a minimum of 3 pounds but will not charge for exact weight but instead charge for the weight ordered. So, if the customer orders 3 pounds and you end up giving them 3.1 pounds, you still only charge \$9.00. In this case, the price is \$3.00. The pricing unit is “pound” and the ordering unit is “pound”. This is not a random weight product because the customer can determine what the price will be in advance. Modifying this example slightly, if you did decide that you want to charge for exact weight (e.g. charge \$9.30 for the 3.1 pound bag) then all of the other information would be the same, but now this would be a random weight product because when the customer orders 3 pounds, he/she has no way of determining the final price which depends upon your weighing the item.

- f. If it is a random weight product (the price depends on the weight), we need to know the approximate range of weights. Example: roast, sold by a package of one roast; price is \$4/lb; the roasts weigh between 2 and 4 pounds. If it is a variable weight product which is sold for a single standard price rather than a price based on a random weight, you should have listed the range of weights in the basic description so the customers know what they are getting. The customer needs this information to know how much to order.

3. To participate in a shopping cycle, a producer must go into his/her producer profile and check the box "List me" in the "update business details" section. While you're always listed as a participating producer, your products won't be listed in a cycle unless you let us know you're participating in that particular run.
4. All product changes must be made by midnight Friday.
5. Customers begin shopping at 9 a.m. on Saturday and must finish their orders by midnight Sunday.
6. You can view the on-going progress of your orders by logging into the Co-op's membership site of purpleporchcoop.com, but customers may change their orders (add or delete items, change quantities, etc.) until the close of the shopping period on Sunday. Do not consider your orders as "final" until after the close of the last day of shopping.
7. When you check your orders at the close of the shopping period, there will be links for your orders sorted by PRODUCT and by CUSTOMER. You will only see your orders. The member invoices have member contact information (phone/email) so you can communicate directly with them if a problem arises with an order.
8. If customers have ordered products from you that have random weights necessary for determining product prices, you will see that information on your invoice. When you have that customer's information, enter it in the appropriate box and press the UPDATE button next to that entry.
9. If you run out of inventory on a particular product, notify the customer immediately (email if they have it is fine) so that the customer can choose a substitution from another producer if you don't have a substitute to suggest. Please be prompt in completing these invoices, especially if you have an out-of-stock situation. If you do not have the product, other producers may have it available. Customers expect to be notified if you are out of a product, and you will preserve your customer relationship with them if you are prompt in telling them that you are out of an item so that they can order a substitute from either you or somebody else. Some customers are ordering most of their family's food from the Co-op, and if an item is not delivered or they are not able to order a substitute it will create a problem for the customer.
10. Once you have entered any weights for random weight items, and marked any items out of stock, and updated each item, review the overall invoice. All your changes should be saved and all item prices should now be correct. If all the information is there, you should have a total dollar amount at the bottom of your invoice that reflects the amount that you will receive from the Co-op for this order. If this total (or any of the individual prices of items) is incorrect, please contact us at help@purpleporchcoop.com. In the subject line of your e-mail, put "Invoice Error" and your producer name. This needs to be resolved prior to delivery day because prices listed on this invoice also feed into the individual customer invoices. Therefore, if the prices we have for your products are wrong, we will not collect the correct amount from customers. Our ability to pay you the right amount is dependent upon our ability to collect the right amounts from the customer members.
11. After the product update period has ended on midnight Friday, product prices cannot change until the next cycle begins. Once customers have ordered a product at a particular price, you cannot raise the price. You could lower it, but you will have to send the customer a refund directly, as this takes too much Co-op administrative time.

12. Please review your order, enter all your weights and out-of-stocks, and determine your invoice is correct by midnight Tuesday before Distribution Day. Customers will have the opportunity on Wednesday morning and afternoon to check their online invoices and the Co-op will prepare the invoices for the customers and producers, print them, and have them ready for the evening's distribution.
13. All questions about customer orders should go directly to the customer. Customer contact information is on your order page that is sorted by CUSTOMER.
14. CHECK YOUR E-MAIL several times during the cycle in case there are any Distribution Day issues that need to be addressed.
15. The Distribution Day is always on Wednesday evening. Producers arrive and set-up their booths with their products from 4:30 to 5:15 p.m. Customers pick up their items from 5:15 to 7:30 p.m. Producers are expected to remain on site until all of his/her orders for that evening have been fulfilled.

How to Prepare Your Product for Distribution Day

1. Label items prominently with the member's FIRST AND LAST NAME, the weight of the product if applicable, and the name of the producer. Orders are delivered packaged for individual customers. Do not deliver 50 pounds of bulk lettuce and expect the Co-op to divide it up among your customers for you.
2. Labels for your customers are available each shopping cycle in a PDF on the website in your producer menu.
3. If a customer has ordered several products from you, package an individual member's order together using sturdy bags that are twist-tied or loosely tied so they are easy to open and check in on Distribution Day. Make sure the customer name and producer name are prominently labeled on the bag.
4. If you have some products which are frozen or refrigerated, and some products for a customer that are dry goods or otherwise non-refrigerated, they should be delivered in separate containers. Frozen items must be hard frozen, and refrigerated items must be cold to the touch. (Note: Purple Porch Cooperative does not have refrigeration or freezer equipment for producer's products. It is the responsibility of producers to bring coolers on Distribution Day for products that must remain chilled).

Delivery Day Procedures

1. The Distribution Day location is always the same – Good Shepherd Montessori at 1101 E. Jefferson; South Bend, IN 46617 (a map is available on our website).
2. Distribution Day always falls on a Wednesday, the close of the order/delivery cycle.
3. Producers are responsible for getting their properly prepared, packaged, and labeled products to the distribution location during the set time frame (4:30-5:15 p.m.). The Co-op expects producers to remain on site until all of his/her orders for that evening have been fulfilled. Customers may pick up their products between 5:15-7:30 p.m.
4. Co-op volunteers will be on hand to assist producers with the unloading and set-up of their products.

5. The Co-op will provide tables and chairs for producers to use, as well as a poster with the name of the farm or business, but producers are expected to bring the necessary materials for the display of their products (e.g. baskets for display of eggs).
6. Please follow volunteers' directions regarding parking.

Contacting the Co-op

If you experience problems with the website while adding/changing product or if at any time you have questions, you may contact the Co-op for help. E-mail help@purpleporchcoop.com or call (574) 233-1055.

Changes to these Guidelines

The Producer Guidelines are subject to change without the consent of the producer. If changes are made, producer members will be notified and updates will be made public on the web site.

Kudos

A special thank you goes to the West Michigan Co-op. They have graciously allowed us to use their Producer Guidelines as a framework for our Producer Guidelines. Much of this is a product of their original hard work.