

Experts on Tap

Ari Derfel General Manager Kootenay Coop

Ari Derfel is the General Manager of the Kootenay Co-op, the largest, member-owned cooperative grocery in Canada, located in Nelson, British Columbia.

Over the span of his 25-year career, Ari has been an entrepreneur, restaurateur, executive coach, strategic consultant, food systems advocate, mountain guide & public speaker. His academic career spans the University of Wisconsin, Harvard, Georgetown, UCLA & Cambridge University in England.

He is the co-founder of the award-winning Gather restaurant in Berkeley, known for its outstanding cuisine, sustainable food and beverage programs, design, and financing strategies. The NY Times called Gather, “a Michael Pollan book come to life” and Esquire Magazine named Gather one of the Best New Restaurants in the US in 2010. Ari also co-founded Back to Earth in 2001, the first exclusively organic catering and event production company in the world.

Ari currently serves as the President of the Central Kootenay Food Policy Council (CKFPC). The purpose of the Council is to be the formal bridge between local government and the many civil society and industry organizations working on food systems in the region, from hunger and food access to farming and waste management. He also serves on the Board of Community Foods Market, the first full service-grocery in urban West Oakland, California in nearly a quarter century.

He is also the former Executive Director of Slow Money, a national organization, with chapters across the US and abroad, focused on catalyzing investment in Local Food Systems.

Ari is also internationally known for his work on waste and consumerism. In 2007, as a personal meditation, he saved every single piece of trash and recycling he created over the course of the entire year. When he was done, he commissioned an artist to turn it all into a piece of art. His efforts were featured in numerous print, television, web and radio media worldwide.