

## Trader Joe's Arrival Delayed Due to Lack of Strange

I hope there aren't many Strange Up Salem skeptics, but some might say that this campaign to spice up our overly bland city is out of touch with the "jobs, jobs, jobs!" cry that dominates so much of social discourse these days.

They'd be wrong.

As noted in my first column, something strange is out of the ordinary. (Head to [www.willamettelive.com](http://www.willamettelive.com) if you missed it.) And most businesses thinking about locating or expanding in Salem aren't interested in ordinariness.

After all, what they'd be offering is an alternative to what is available here now. So they're looking for evidence that people who live here are going to be open to fresh possibilities.

Thus if we Strange Up Salem, we're engaging in economic development. Along with making this town more creative, fun, dynamic, and appealing.

Consider Trader Joe's. My wife and I love to shop at their stores. Whenever we'd go to a Trader Joe's in Portland or Eugene we'd ask, "Any plans to open a store in Salem?"

The reply always was negative or non-committal. Then our hopes were further crushed when, in July 2009, Trader Joe's announced it was opening a store in Corvallis.

*Freacking Corvallis!* Amazing. Salem was a city of 155,000 people; Corvallis had 55,000. As the name of a Salem Weekly feature puts it, OMG! WTF?

Well, the way I saw it, the numbers told the story.

It seemed that Salem residents were about one-third as amenable to a Trader's Joe's as Corvallis folks. In a news story at that time, differing educational and income levels in the two cities were offered up as the reason why Trader Joe's came to Corvallis first.

But in my current strange-a-centric view of reality, Salem's strangeness deficit largely was to blame. Too many people here aren't open to something new and different, whether culinary or otherwise.

A Trader's Joe's doesn't offer the same old stuff that can be found in a regular supermarket. To many (including quite a few of our relatives), food that is healthy and organic is disturbingly *strange*. They won't buy or eat it.

Fortunately, a Trader Joe's is slated to open on south Commercial soon. Salem will have a much-needed alternative grocery shopping option. And I'm confident that plenty of people are going to flock to the store. (My wife and I will remain loyal LifeSource customers also).

Bottom line: A place and the people who live there are intimately intertwined. If we want Salem to be a more interesting and lively place, we have to cultivate those qualities in ourselves.

Free enterprise is adept at filling voids. When there is unfulfilled demand for new and different, a.k.a. strangeness, individuals and businesses will offer up out-of-the-ordinary wares.

Salem is going to be as boring or as vibrant as the people who live here are. Together we can Strange Up Salem. Become a Facebook fan or Twitter follower at [www.strangeupsalem.com](http://www.strangeupsalem.com)

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