

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 7: July 16

ALLEN
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Veggie Box

Welcome to Week 7 of the Summer Veggie Box! The South is distinctive in its customs, dialect, and cuisine. It's made up of many different peoples who came to the region in a variety of ways, each contributing to what is now called Southern cuisine.

For example, indigenous peoples had a strong influence in the early beginnings of Southern food: crops like corn, and techniques like frying and barbecuing. However, Spanish explorers in the 1500s brought pigs with them, introducing pork to the region. West Africans carried some of their traditional foods with them, such as watermelon, eggplant, collard greens, and okra, when they were brought by force as slaves beginning in the 1600s. Creoles, known for their unique use of spices, are descended from French and Haitian immigrants who later mingled with Spanish settlers in the New Orleans area. "Cajuns," also recognized for their unique style of cooking, were originally Acadians, French settlers in Nova Scotia who were driven out by the British in the 1700s and made their way to New Orleans. However, African slaves have had the largest impact on this cuisine by far: the intersections of African food preparations, class status, laws that prevented equal access and innovative survival prevailed and mixed with other cultures to create what we consider Southern Cuisine. Another interesting fact - much of the distinct nature and flavors of Southern foods come from preservation methods. Using salt and frying foods were used to make food last longer without refrigeration, as was drying meats to make jerky. Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Hunter Park GardenHouse

The Hunter Park GardenHouse, a project of Allen Neighborhood Center, is a hub for year-round farm & garden education, where neighbors volunteer to grow food, flowers, and community, and youth develop job and life skills in service to the neighborhood. Since 2008, the Hunter Park GardenHouse has empowered neighbors to grow, prepare, and eat healthy food to better their health and become better connected with the community.

Crop Profile

Currants

Currants are members of the Ribes family of flowering shrubs, and are closely related to gooseberries! These small berries are delicious when eaten fresh. They vary in color from deep dark purple to brilliant ruby red to an almost translucent white. All varieties have a bright acid kick to balance out their sweetness, and a fair amount of tannins that can make your mouth pucker. Though black currants are sweet, they also have a unique tart flavor; usually black currants are cooked into pies and tarts, made into jams and jellies, or even paired with wild game due to their unique flavor! Red currants, though they have a touch of tartness, are brighter and tangier than their black counterparts. Finally, white currants are more delicate and mild, with a sweeter flavor, and are more commonly eaten raw. Use them fresh in fruit salads, particularly berry mixes, in yogurt, or to garnish desserts with their pretty color.

What's in the Box?

Blueberries, Felzke Farms, Dewitt

Fennel, Ten Hens Farm, Bath

Salad Mix, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing

Organic Cucumbers, CBI's Giving Tree Farm, Lansing and MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Organic Kohlrabi, CBI's Giving Tree Farm, Lansing

Currants, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, Chesaning

Green Tomatoes, Peckham Farms, Lansing

Organic Collard Greens, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Thyme, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing

Add-Ons

Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt

Meat, Trillium Wood Farm, Williamston

Sweet Treats, Rooted Home Farm & Goods, Lansing

Chevre, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga

Cheese, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga

Chicken, Trillium Wood Farm, Williamston

Pork, Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte

Beef, Heffron Farms Market, Belding

Cold Brew Coffee, Rust Belt Roastery, Lansing

Coffee, Rust Belt Roastery, Lansing

Eggs, Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte

Recipes and Tips!

Currant Jam

Veggie Box cups currants, de-stemmed
Water, just enough to cover the bottom of the pan
granulated sugar (amount depends on weight of puree - see instructions)

zest & juice of 1/4 a lemon
1 jam jar with lid, sterilized

Rinse the berries and remove them from the stems. Place the berries in a large pot and just barely cover the bottom of the pot with water. On medium high heat, cook 3-5 minutes until the berries have become soft and wilted. Place berries and water in a food processor and blend until you've reached a puree consistency. Press the puree through a mesh strainer and discard any seeds and skin remaining. Weigh the remaining puree and measure out the same weight of granulated sugar. Put the puree and weighed sugar in the same large pot along with the juice and zest of 1/4 a lemon and stir to combine. Bring pot to a boil over medium-high heat and cook undisturbed for 7 minutes. Skim the scum off the top of the boiled mixture. Ladle or pour the jam into prepared jar and screw on the lid. Refrigerate 24 hours or until set. Jam will keep cold for several weeks.

Southern Collard Greens

Veggie Box collard greens washed, and cut
1 medium sized ham hock (optional)

1 1/2 cups broth

1 tsp seasoning salt

1/4 tsp ground black pepper

1/2 large onion diced

1/2 tsp garlic powder

1 tsp vinegar white or apple cider vinegar will do

1/2 tbs garlic minced

Start off by placing the smoked ham hock and the water into a slow cooker. Set the slow cooker on high, and let cook for 2 hours, or until tender. Next, transfer the ham hock, and the liquid to a large pot. Place the pot over medium high heat, and start adding in the collard greens. Once all of the collard greens are in the pot, add in the onions, garlic, and seasonings. Give everything a nice stir, then add in the vinegar. Reduce the heat to medium, and let the greens cook for about an hour, or until tender. Serve with cornbread. Enjoy!



Southern Fried Green Tomatoes

Veggie Box green tomatoes

1 egg mixed with a splash of buttermilk (or regular milk)

A shallow bowl of flour

A shallow bowl of cornmeal

paprika, salt, and pepper to taste

Slice the tomatoes into 1/4 inch slices, and sprinkle with salt, pepper, and paprika on both sides. Next, dredge the tomato slices in flour, then the egg/milk mixture, and finally the cornmeal. Heat oil 1/4 - 1/2 an inch of oil in a cast iron skillet until hot, and then fry each side until golden brown. Commonly, fried green tomatoes are served with a mayonnaise/ ketchup dipping sauce (flavored with cayenne or paprika and garlic powder). Enjoy!



Southern Cucumber Salad

Veggie Box cucumber (peeled if you prefer)

1/2 a sweet onion, sliced thin

2 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt divided

1 teaspoon of pepper

3/4 cup sour cream

3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

1/2 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon of chopped dill

Thinly slice cucumbers and onion. Sprinkle them with 2 teaspoons of kosher salt and place them in a colander in the sink. Allow the salt to draw out the excess moisture for 1-2 hours. Make the dressing by combining, the sour cream, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, vinegar, sugar, and fresh dill and mix well. Once the cucumbers and onions have drained, shake off the excess moisture and combine them with the dressing in a large bowl. Refrigerate until serving.

