

# Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 12: May 23

Welcome to the final week of the Spring Veggie Box! Have you ever thought about the impact that climate change can have on local farming? Last year we saw one of the driest summers that Mid-Michigan, and even the country, had seen in some time. Our farmers had to adapt, working even longer and harder than normal to deal with droughts. After the brutal polar vortex this winter, farmers are now facing a cooler and wetter spring than normal, which has set back their crop plans. Ultimately, agriculture is directly affected by all indications and consequences of climate change, such as droughts and floods, storms and tornadoes, rising sea levels, salinization of groundwater, more frequent and extreme weather events, increasing species extinction and the spread of old and new diseases. So how can farmers combat climate change? As a rule of thumb, diversification will reduce vulnerability to extreme conditions and increase resilience. Monoculture regions, or the cultivation of a single crop in an area, are obviously more exposed and vulnerable to many of the described challenges than systems which grow a wide variety of crops and can still produce sufficient yields even if one crop suffers or fails. Here in Michigan, many larger farms grow subsidy crops, or crops that have a government incentive attached to them: corn and soybeans are some of the largest. However, the small-scale farms who provide to the Veggie Box grow a large variety of produce, and do so in hoophouses and greenhouses, which can help control the climate. Which model seems more sustainable given the threat of climate change? Thank you for supporting local food!

## Producer Spotlight

### *Phillips Orchards & Cider Mill*

Phillips Orchard and Cider Mill is a sixth generation family farm, founded in 1852 - that's five years older than MSU, and is in their 168th year of business! Phillips growing 36 varieties of apples, 15 varieties of peaches, 2 varieties of plums, pumpkins, winter squash and a few other things. Phillips also operates an on-farm bakery 7 months of the year, making from scratch pies, bread and other baked goods. Through the generations, Phillips has been committed to providing the area with high quality food, that is a great value to customers.

## Crop Profile

### *Rhubarb*

Throughout history, rhubarb has been used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Although you can eat rhubarb raw, you probably won't enjoy it: it has a brutally sour taste, so most people prefer to cook it with sugar. With thick, crisp, edible stalks, rhubarb resembles celery, but is prettier. Their leaves contain a very high level of oxalic acid and are therefore inedible. Rhubarb is often confused with being a fruit because of their sour, tart taste. It is treated as a fruit in many culinary uses as it is being used in the production of jams, jellies, and compotes. It is commonly paired with strawberries to balance its sour-bitter flavor. This pairing is also due to both strawberries and rhubarb becoming some of the first produce to appear in the spring/summer!



## What's in the Box?

- Organic Popcorn**, CBI's Giving Tree Farm, Lansing
- Baby Bok Choi**, Hunter Park GardenHouse Lansing
- Head Lettuce**, Hunter Park Gardenhouse Lansing
- Asparagus**, Hillcrest Farms, Eaton Rapids
- Jonathan Apples**, Phillips Orchards & Cider Mill, St. Johns
- Carrots**, Green Gardens Community Farm, Battle Creek
- Rhubarb**, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, Chesaning
- Lemon Thyme**, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing
- Radishes**, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing
- Parsnips**, Felzke Farms, Dewitt

## Add-Ons

- Cheese**, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga
- Eggs**, Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte
- Organic Pinto Beans**, Ferris Organic Farm, Eaton Rapids
- Chevre**, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga

# Recipes and Tips!

## Hakurei Turnip & Parsnip Stew

5-6 cups vegetable stock  
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
Veggie Box hakurei turnips, greens washed and chopped, bulbs washed, thinly sliced, and kept separate  
Veggie Box parsnips, thinly sliced  
1 cup of onions or scallions, diced  
1 cup pasta, your favorite  
1 cup crushed tomatoes  
2 cloves of garlic, minced  
Salt to taste  
Freshly-ground black pepper, to taste

**Heat the stock and the crushed tomatoes in a stock pot over medium high heat until it reaches a low boil. While stock is heating, heat the oil in a saute pan or skillet over medium heat and cook the turnip bulb slices and parsnip slices for 2 minutes, stirring. Add the onions/scallions and cook for another 3-5 minutes, stirring, or until turnips and parsnips are beginning to soften. Remove from heat. When the liquid reaches a low boil, cook the pasta until it is or slightly undercooked. Add the chopped turnip greens, parsnips, and turnip bulbs, and cook for another minute or two or until the pasta is done the way you like it, and the greens are wilted. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle in to serving bowls, and top with Parmesan.**

## Rhubarb Crisp

3/4 cup sugar  
3 tablespoons cornstarch  
Veggie Box rhubarb, sliced  
2 cups sliced Veggie Box apples  
1 cup quick-cooking or old-fashioned oats  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
1/2 cup butter, melted  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
Vanilla ice cream, optional

**In a large bowl, combine sugar and cornstarch. Add rhubarb and apples ; toss to coat. Spoon into an 8-in. cast-iron skillet or other ovenproof skillet. In a small bowl, combine the oats, brown sugar, butter, flour and cinnamon until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over the rhubarb and apple mixture. Bake at 350° until crisp is bubbly and fruit is tender, about 45 minutes. If desired, serve warm with ice cream.**

## Stir-Fried Baby Bok Choi

Veggie Box baby bok choy  
2-3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**Trim the bottoms of the baby bok choy and rinse thoroughly in cold water to remove any grit that likes to collect down at the base of each bundle. Cut any larger pieces in halves or quarters, if needed. You can leave very small and tender baby bok choy whole, just make sure all of the bok choy is roughly the same size so they cook evenly. Heat a large pan over medium-high heat, then add the oil and swirl to coat the bottom and sides. Add the garlic and stir-fry until fragrant, about 30 seconds, but be sure not to burn. Add the bok choy and stir-fry for 2-4 minutes, until the green leaves are wilted and the stalks are tender-crisp. I find it easiest to use tongs and when working with baby bok choy so I can grab some of the leaves and turn them over or toss them around the pan. Add the soy sauce and season with freshly ground black pepper, then cook for another 30 seconds. Transfer to a serving plate and serve hot.**



## Oven Roasted Asparagus

Veggie Box asparagus  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 1/2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese  
1 teaspoon sea salt  
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon lemon juice

**Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Place the asparagus into a mixing bowl, and drizzle with the olive oil. Toss to coat the spears, then sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, salt, and pepper. Arrange the asparagus onto a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake in the preheated oven until just tender, 12 to 15 minutes depending on thickness. Sprinkle with lemon juice just before serving.**