

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 6: July 7th

Buy local- you hear this phrase all the time, but why is it so important? Local produce is often much fresher and tastier since it is picked when in-season, compared to produce grown miles away that had been picked before it was ripe. Produce that is in season can be picked at peak ripeness and transported to local grocery stores or farmers markets usually within 24 hours. Produce grown locally also has greater nutrient value, since less time passes between harvest to your table. Food imported from far away can lose its nutrient value as it ages during transport. Similarly, food that requires fewer steps from farm to table has a smaller risk of becoming contaminated, which leads to a safer food supply. Another major benefit of buying locally is the environmental impact. Local foods require less travel, thus cutting down on fuel consumption and air pollution that long truck drives cause. Shopping at a farmers market also eliminates the need for packaging facilities and refrigeration. Supporting our local farmers helps keep their operations running, which prevents their farmland from being sold by developers who could destroy the land and its wildlife. Your support will also help prevent big businesses from buying out the farm and using non-eco-friendly farming practices. Thank you for shopping local and helping save our planet!

Producer Spotlight

Tomac Pumpkin Patch

Tomac Pumpkin Farm is a 4-generation family run operation located in Chesaning, Michigan. They started as a 4-H and FFA project selling a few pumpkins, but have grown to primarily raise corn, soybeans, and wheat over the last 30 years. They also now offer almost 100 different pumpkins, gourds and squashes as well as other traditional fall decorations like corn stalks, straw, and Flint corn.

Crop Profile

Currants

Currants are small berries that are members of the Ribes family of flowering shrubs. They vary in color from dark purple, to brilliant red, to a translucent white. These berries have a bright acid kick to balance out their sweetness, and they contain tannins which can make your mouth pucker. Red currants tend to taste more tart, while the white variety has more of a mild, sweet flavor. Currants can be eaten fresh and used in fruit salads, berry mixes, or as a garnish to desserts. Red currents are delicious in baked goods, such as tarts and pies. White currants are commonly used in preserves, wines, and syrups. Fresh currants should be stored chilled and loosely wrapped or covered, and rinsed just before eating. For longer storage, currants can be frozen in resealable bags like other berries.



What's in the Box?

Organic Summer Squash, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Organic Oakleaf Lettuce, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Fresh Garlic, Ten Hens Farm, Bath

Green Onions, Magnolia Farms, Lansing

Swiss Chard, Magnolia Farms, Lansing

Basil, Titus Farms, Leslie

Currants, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, Chesaning

Add-Ons

Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt

Meat Variety, Trillium Wood Farm, Williamston

Sweet Treats, Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt

Recipes and Tips!

Currant Jam

Veggie Box 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 the 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.

Strawberry, Cucumber, & Basil Salad

2 cups hulled strawberries (last week's Veggie Box), quartered
1 tablespoon thinly sliced Veggie Box basil
1 tablespoon mint (optional, last week's VB)
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1 medium cucumber (last week's VB), peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and thinly sliced (about 2 cups)
1/2 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Combine first 4 ingredients in a large bowl, and toss gently to coat. Cover and chill for 1 hour. Combine cucumbers and juice; toss to coat. Add cucumber mixture, salt, and pepper to strawberry mixture; toss gently to combine. Serve immediately.

Currant Muffins

1/2 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon grated orange peel
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup fresh Veggie Box currants
Confectioners' sugar

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar. Add both eggs and orange peel and beat well. Sieve the flour, baking powder and salt into the creamed mixture and lightly blend. Fold in the red currants. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups two-thirds full and bake at 375° for 20-25 minutes or until muffins test done. Cool for 5 minutes before placing on wire rack. Dust with confectioners' (icing) sugar once completely cooled.



Sautéed Yellow Squash with Basil and Chard

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 ounce pine nuts
2 cloves of Veggie Box minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
1 cup torn Veggie Box basil leaves
Veggie Box squash, sliced lengthwise paper-thin on a mandoline
Veggie Box green onions
Veggie Box Swiss chard.
Kosher salt
Black pepper

In a large skillet, melt the butter over moderately high heat. Add the garlic, pine nuts, pepper, chard, and green onions. Sauté for 1 minute and add the squash. Toss and sauté over moderate heat for 2 minutes. Add the basil, toss, and remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper and serve.