

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 7: July 16th

Welcome to week 7 of the Summer Veggie Box! When talking about our food system, a topic that often comes up is the racial injustice within it. The food system we know today was built on the mistreatment of people of color - beginning with stealing land from indigenous people to the enslavement of Black folks to work in the fields, and the ongoing mistreatment of latinx farm workers - this is a system built on control and corruption. For centuries, the capitalist food system that we primarily know has concentrated its power in the hands of the privileged few and pushed social and environmental injustices primarily onto racially stigmatized groups. In the early 20th century, Black Americans owned nearly 16 million acres of farmland, by 1997 there was as little as 2 million acres owned. Farms are predominantly run by white farmers whereas farm workers are disproportionately people of color. These workers are often paid poverty level wages and experience high levels of food insecurity, wage theft and harassment. Race, poverty and food insecurity are all interconnected. Recognizing racism in our food system is an important step in creating a system that is rooted in equity. There is no food justice without racial justice. Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Peckham Farms

Peckham Farms is a 10 acre farm located in Lansing, MI. It is a part of Peckham Inc., a non-profit organization that provides rehabilitation and vocational training to individuals with disabilities and who face other employment barriers. The farm uses sustainable farming techniques such as water reclamation and Integrated Pest Management. Peckham Farms specializes in small fruits and is a large raspberry producer in the Mid-Michigan area. Peckham is also known for the beautiful flowers grown annually on the fields and in baskets.

Crop Profile

Fennel

Fennel is a flowering plant in the carrot family that is native to the Mediterranean region. There are two main types of fennel: herb fennel and Florence fennel, or the Italian finocchio. Herb fennel's stems, seeds, and feathery leaves that look just like its cousin dill are all harvested and used. Florence fennel, however, is grown primarily for its large, bulb-like bottom that is eaten as a vegetable. Typically, the trimmed off green tops only garnish dishes. Regardless of type, fennel has a strong anise or licorice flavor. The crisp bulbs can be eaten raw by cutting into thin slices for salads and slaws. If it's cooked, the bulb's flavor becomes softer and more mellow. In various cultures, fennel has a long history for its uses as an herb, food source, and object in important rituals. It has also been considered one of the best carminatives, which are used to reduce gas, bloating, and nausea, and was baked or boiled along with other foods to make them easier to digest. Today, fennel is still used in many of the same ways and may make a helpful digestive aid in addition to being a delicious vegetable or spice.

What's in the Box?

Organic Fennel, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt*

Organic Head Lettuce, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt*

Organic Chard, *Monroe Family Organics, Alma*

Tomatoes, *Hunter Park Garden House, Lansing*

Green Tomatoes, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Onions, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Purple Basil, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Green Peppers, *Peckham Farms, Lansing*

Blueberries, *Felzke Farms, Dewitt*

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt*

Cheese, *Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga*

Chevre, *Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga*

Meat Variety, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*

Pork, *Grazing fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Chicken, *Trillium Wood Farm, Williamston*

Beef, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*

Eggs, *Grazing fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Coffee, *Rust Belt Roastery, Lansing*

Cold Brew Coffee, *Rust Belt Roastery, Lansing*

Kombucha, *Apple Blossom Kombucha, Lansing*

Sweet Treats, *Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt*

Recipes and Tips!

Sweet Fennel Butter

1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
3 tablespoons chopped fresh fennel fronds
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
2 teaspoons freshly grated orange zest
1 teaspoon honey

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Mix together butter, fennel, orange juice, zest and honey until smooth, either in a food processor, in an electric mixer, or by hand. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Scrape butter into a decorative small bowl and serve



Fresh Salsa

Veggie Box tomatoes, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
1/4 cup Veggie Box onions, finely chopped
1 tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped
1 tbsp. fresh Veggie Box basil, chopped
1/2 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
1 Veggie Box bell pepper
1 teaspoon minced garlic (from last week's box)
2 teaspoons lime juice
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
1/2 teaspoon sugar

Combine all ingredients into a bowl. After that, mix them together well and let the combination sit for about ten minutes, so all the flavors meld together. Make sure the onion, bell pepper, garlic and jalapeno pepper are truly chopped fine enough. There are some powerful flavors in those vegetables and the smaller you can make each piece, the better.

Caramelized Fennel and Onions Recipe

Veggie Box onions, halved then sliced lengthwise (root to tip) in 1/4-inch thick slices
Veggie Box fennel bulb, sliced into 1/4-inch thick slices
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp butter
Salt
1/4 cup grated Parmesan
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1 teaspoon lemon zest
2 teaspoons lemon juice

Cook fennel and onions in olive oil and butter: Heat olive oil and butter in a large, uncovered, wide pan on medium high heat. Add the sliced fennel and onions and stir to coat. Stir occasionally. After about 10 minutes, sprinkle the onions and fennel with salt. Lower the temperature to medium. You want to strike a balance between allowing the pan to get hot enough so that some caramelization and keeping the pot from getting so hot that the onions and fennel dry out. If it becomes an issue, you can add a couple tablespoons of water to the pan to help the onions and fennel to keep from drying out too much. Stir occasionally, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Note that the browned bits are the tastiest parts. Cook for another 30 minutes to an hour. The longer you cook, the more caramelized and browned. By the way, the onions and fennel will have plenty of flavor without having to be completely cooked down and browned all over. When ready to serve, remove from heat and toss in the freshly grated Parmesan cheese, the chopped parsley, lemon zest and lemon juice. Taste and add more lemon juice if necessary.

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!