

# Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 10: August 6th

Have you ever wanted to start your own garden but think you don't have enough space? Think again! Square-foot gardening has become a popular approach to growing food that uses intensive spacing to get the most food possible out of a small space. With this method, you don't need a big yard. Food can be grown on a patio, balcony or any other small plot. 4 by 4 foot raised garden beds makes for easy access, less work and strain on the body, and no damages to the yard. If you are new to gardening, this method is very easy and requires no weeding with the right setup. The basic setup starts with a 4x4 raised bed box, which can be built or bought. If you're building on top of other soil and you'd like less weeds, line your box with weed barrier landscaping fabric. Next, fill the beds with fertile weed-free potting soil (part peat moss, compost, vermiculite, and a mix of your choice). To ensure proper plant spacing, lay a square foot grid over the top of the soil. Grids can be handmade using thin slats of wood crafted into 1x1 foot squares, or they can be purchased from Amazon. Plant your seeds in each plot, water them, and start growing! Thank you for growing and shopping local food!



## What's in the Box?

**Organic Dill**, *MSU Student Organic Farm*, Holt  
**Pickling Cucumbers**, *Felzke Farms*, Dewitt  
**Banana Peppers**, *Felzke Farms*, Dewitt  
**Organic Garlic**, *Owosso Organics*, Owosso  
**Organic Summer Squash**, *Owosso Organics*, Owosso  
**Sweet Corn**, *Tomac Pumpkin Patch*, Chesaning  
**Cherry Tomatoes**, *Peckham Farms*, Lansing  
**Organic Kohlrabi**, *CBI's Giving Tree Farm*, Lansing

## Add-Ons

**Bread**, *Stone Circle Bakehouse*, Holt  
**Cold Brew Coffee**, *Rust Belt Roastery*, Lansing  
**Sweet Treats**, *Stone Circle Bakehouse*, Holt  
**Meat Variety**, *Heffron Farms*, Belding; & *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte  
**Beef**, *Heffron Farms*, Belding  
**Pork**, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte

## 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 Indian corn.

## Crop Profile

### *Sweet Corn*

Corn was domesticated from a grass called teocintle by the peoples of Meso-America approximately 10,000 years ago. The yellow corn commonly found in the United States pales in comparison to the shapes, sizes, and colors of the traditional maize varieties cultivated by the indigenous peoples of Mexico. The ears of corn may range from a couple of inches to a foot long, in colors that include white, red, yellow, blue, and black. Some varieties even have an assortment of colors on one ear. Sweet corn is a variety of maize with a high sugar content, and was grown by a number of indigenous tribes. Corn is also one of the three sisters in Iroquois agriculture and tradition, along with beans and winter squash. In a technique known as companion planting the three crops are planted close together. The maize provides a structure for the beans to climb, eliminating the need for poles. The beans provide the nitrogen to the soil that the other plants use, and the squash spreads along the ground, blocking the sunlight, helping prevent the establishment of weeds.

# Recipes and Tips!

## Elote: Mexican Street Corn

Veggie Box Sweet Corn  
Mexican Crema  
Cotija cheese  
Chili powder or smoked paprika  
Limes  
Cilantro

**The husks will keep the corn safe from the direct heat on the grill so make sure you leave them on. To prepare the corn, just strip the husks back, remove the silk and then fold the husks back up. The real secret to grilling corn on the cob starts before it ever hits the grill. You need to fill your sink with cold water and 1-2 tablespoons of kosher salt. Drop the silk-free corn in the water and let it soak for a good 10-15 minutes. Soaking the corn will allow the corn to stay moist, plus the husks won't burn off to ash and the corn will be more flavorful thanks to the salt brine. You'll grill the corn first in the husks, then strip them back and turn the grill up, rotating the corn as soon as grill marks appear. Grilled corn on the cob in the husks won't dry out as easily and will make for juicier corn. As soon as you pull the corn off the grill, spread the Mexican crema all over each corn on the cob. If you can't find Mexican crema, you can use mayonnaise as a substitute. Sprinkle the cotija all over the corn that has been lathered in crema (can use feta in place of the cotija). The classic seasoning for elote is chili powder, but can also use smoked paprika. So maybe do a few cobs with each and see which one you prefer. You can sprinkle them on the corn with the cotija cheese and then squeeze fresh lime juice all over each corn on the cob. Top off each cob with some chopped fresh cilantro.**



## Half-Sour Pickles

Veggie Box cucumbers, quartered (or halved) lengthwise  
3 cloves of Veggie Box garlic  
Veggie Box dill  
2 tablespoons of pickling spices (you can buy pickling spices, or make your own! It includes: mustard seed, whole allspice, coriander seeds, whole cloves, ground ginger, crumbled bay leaf).  
2 tablespoons of kosher salt  
1/3 cup of white vinegar  
3 1/2 cups of water

**Wash the cucumbers and quarter them. Flatten the garlic with the back of a knife. Place the cucumbers, garlic, dill, and pickling spices in a crock, glass jar, or bowl large enough to allow at least 2 inches of space between the pickles and the top of the container. Bring the salt, vinegar, and water to a boil and boil for 2 minutes. Pour the brine over the cucumbers and weigh down with a plate and some cans or jars filled with water. Leave them out overnight, and the next day place contents in the refrigerator in a large jar, or several smaller jars (this includes dill, garlic, and the brine!). After 4-5 days in the fridge, enjoy! They can keep for up to 3 weeks.**

## Pickled Banana Peppers

2 Veggie Box banana peppers, seeded & sliced into rings  
1 clove of Veggie Box garlic, minced  
2/3 cup white vinegar  
1/2 cups water  
1/2 tablespoon kosher salt  
1/4 tablespoon sugar  
1/4 teaspoon mustard seeds (optional)  
1/4 teaspoon celery seed (optional)

**Add the sliced banana peppers and minced garlic evenly into one 1-pint jar. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the white vinegar, water, salt, sugar, mustard seeds, and celery seed. Stir until the mix is completely dissolved and nearing boil, then remove from heat and allow the brine to cool to room temperature. Add the brine to the mason jars, leaving 1/2 inch free at the top of the jar, then seal with a lid. For best flavor, allow the banana peppers to pickle for a minimum of 24 hours or - even better - up to a week prior to eating. Chef's tip: pickled banana peppers are a delicious addition to salads, pizza, sandwiches, and more!**

