

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 8, April 22

ALLEN

Veggie Box

Welcome to the eighth week of the Spring Veggie Box! Chefs, health experts, and Veggie Box staff encourage eating seasonally and locally; when produce is at the peak of its freshness, flavor, and nutrition. Among the many benefits of buying locally, it means that your veggies haven't had a chance to lose flavor or health benefits by sitting in a shipping container for a trip across the country or ocean. Buying seasonal produce also means you are buying it at its peak supply, so it will be cheaper than at other times of the year. Before farming advancements and grocery stores, seasonal eating was the norm - our bodies actually naturally crave these seasonal foods! In the fall and winter, our bodies begin to crave heavier, warm foods; the cold dries out the earth and our bodies, and to counteract these drying effects, we rely on warm, heavy, oily foods to replenish our moisture reserves (stews with potatoes, and rutabagas, roasted root vegetables, etc.). The spring brings bitter greens, which helps detox our liver from the fatty foods from winter. In the summer, since we are more active and are outdoors more often, our bodies crave added energy from sugars and carbohydrates in the summer's bounty (ex. corn, peas, peaches, cantaloupe, strawberries). We also need a higher water intake due to heat in the summer, so foods like watermelon and cucumbers help to sustain us. What are other benefits to eating seasonally? Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Stone Circle Bakehouse

Stone Circle Bakehouse, of Holt, Michigan, specializes in the European tradition of artisanal bread that is cut, scaled, and shaped by hand. Owner Kevin Cosgrove allows his dough to slowly ferment before baking it on the deck of his wood-fired oven. At Stone Circle Bakehouse, the innovative deliciousness stems from Cosgrove's desire to preserve traditional baking methods, rather than change them. Organic, local ingredients are prioritized when possible to bring customers fresh, environmentally and community friendly baked goods.

Crop Profile

Ramps

A foraged delicacy, ramps are like a wild leek but with a more pungent and garlicky taste. Their leaves, stalk, and bulb are edible, and they only appear for about a month or so in the spring, making them a pricey treat. You may be able to find ramps under the shade of deciduous trees in rich soil. Ramps are also important in indigenous cultures - they have long been foraged by indigenous populations (like the Anishinaabeg and Cherokee) as food and medicine, and are even part of folklore. However, the present foraging techniques and the quantities being harvested have consequences that are of concern to botanists, environmentalists, and naturalists. Ramp populations and their preferred habitats are declining in many areas. When foraging for ramps, you should only take the largest ramps from a cluster, and only a handful per cluster at that, and cutting them above the roots to ensure more can grow. Ramps are consumed raw or cooked in soups, pesto, accompanying egg dishes, and sautéed with seasonal foraged wild greens or morels!

What's in the Box?

Organic Spinach, *Monroe Family Organics*, Alma

Chives, *Hunter Park GardenHouse*, Lansing

Lettuce Mix, *Magnolia Farms*, Lansing

Kale, *Titus Farms*, Leslie

Basil Plant Start, *Hunter Park GardenHouse*, Lansing

Foraged Ramps, *Monroe Family Organics*, Alma

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle Bakehouse*, Holt

Meat Variety, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte

Recipes and Tips!

Ramp Butter

Veggie Box Ramps (1 bunch)
1 1/2 sticks of butter (12 tbsp)
Dash of lemon juice
pepper (to taste)
salt (to taste)

Remove the roots from the ramps, and roughly chop them into pieces. Saute for a few minutes, until wilted, and then let cool. To a food processor, add the room temperature butter, and the rest of the ingredients. Process until they reach the texture you want.

Feel free to freeze in small jars, keep in the fridge for more immediate use, or freeze in an ice cube tray! The traditional method is to roll the butter into logs, either in parchment or plastic wrap, so they can be chilled and sliced. You can freeze the rolls for months and just slice off what you need and re-wrap well.



Ramp Pesto

1 bunch of Veggie Box ramps
1 garlic clove
1/4 cup walnuts (toasted)
1/3 cup olive oil (you kind of have to eyeball it)
1/3 cup grated parmigiano reggiano cheese
sea salt
pepper
a squirt of lemon

If you are using a food processor, add everything but the oil and pulse to combine. Then, turn the motor on the processor and drizzle in the olive oil. Be careful not to let the mixture become a smooth paste!

How to Care for your Basil Plant

Where: Basil is a wonderful addition to a container garden. It thrives in well-drained soil, positioned in a sunny window. In a larger garden, plant basil among your tomatoes. It's a one-stop shop for your next caprese salad.

When: Basil is super sensitive to the cold, so whether you are transplanting seedlings from indoors or have plants in the ground, watch the early spring temperatures and cover if necessary. If you are planting a cutting or transplanting a seedling or smaller plant, make sure the ground temperature is at least 70°F.

Propagation: In addition to sowing basil from seed, a cutting of basil will easily root when placed in water. Select a four-inch section of basil that has not yet flowered. Roots will form within a week. Transplant the basil directly into the garden or container once a healthy root system is apparent.

Sun: Basil grows well in warm environments that receive about six hours of sun each day. I have a couple of basil plants growing in an area that receives only four hours of sun, but they aren't as prolific as the others. My best basil plants actually grow in an east-facing area that doesn't get the scorching, midday sun.

Water: Give basil water when the soil is dry to the touch, doing your best to water the plant at its base and not all over its leaves.

Harvesting: Basil is a pick-as-you-go kind of herb. You may harvest only what you need, or if you have an abundance on hand, you may clip a mass harvest. Harvest basil as you would mint, snipping a stem just above the point where two large leaves meet. Regular clipping encourages a more rounded, less leggy plant.

