

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 5, July 1



The South is distinctive in its customs, dialect, and cuisine. It's made up of many different people who came to the region, each contributing to what is now called Southern cuisine. For example, indigenous peoples had a strong influence in the early beginnings of Southern food: crops like corn, and techniques like frying and barbecuing. However, Spanish explorers in the 1500s brought pigs with them, introducing pork to the region. West Africans carried some of their traditional foods with them, such as watermelon, eggplant, collard greens, and okra, when they were brought by force as slaves beginning in the 1600s. Creoles, known for their unique use of spices, are descended from French and Haitian immigrants who later mingled with Spanish settlers in the New Orleans area. "Cajuns," also recognized for their unique style of cooking, were originally Acadians, French settlers in Nova Scotia who were driven out by the British in the 1700s and made their way to New Orleans. However, African slaves have had the largest impact on this cuisine by far: the intersections of African food preparations, class status, laws that prevented equal access and innovative survival prevailed and mixed with other cultures to create what we consider Southern Cuisine. Another interesting fact - much of the distinct nature and flavors of Southern foods come from preservation methods. Using salt and frying foods were used to make food last longer without refrigeration, as was drying meats to make jerky. Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight *Peckham Farms*

Peckham, Inc., a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation organization, provides job training opportunities for persons with significant disabilities and other barriers to employment. Peckham Farms' operation consists of about 15 acres of field production that uses sustainable practices to grow a diverse selection of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. Peckham employees are given the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences in all aspects of growing and producing food. This includes planting, maintenance, and harvesting of crops, set up of greenhouse systems, tool and machine operation and maintenance, and customer service.

Crop Profile *Green Tomatoes*

Tomatoes, like their botanical cousin, the potato, originated in the South American Andes. They were first cultivated around 700 C.E. in South and Central America by the Mayans and Incas. After their arrival in the 15th century, Spanish colonizers brought tomato seeds back to Europe. Green tomatoes are the immature or unripe fruits of any variety of tomato and are generally sourced from the large "slicer" type tomatoes since they are easier to use than smaller cultivars. They were famously re-introduced to the culinary scene after the release of the early 1990s movie, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, based on the book by Fannie Flagg. Green tomatoes offer a crisp and mildly juicy texture. They have a sharp, puckering, astringent flavor with a slight sweetness. Green tomatoes are chameleons that work in sweet recipes and savory. They work like tart apples in jams and desserts. Their firm texture and tart flavor work well as a vegetable in casseroles, soups, and of course breaded and fried. You can substitute green tomatoes for tomatillos in salsa verde.

What's in the Box?

Organic Mint, CBI's Giving Tree Farm, Lansing
Organic Scallions, Monroe Family Organics, Alma
Currants, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, Chesaning
Collard Greens, Titus Farms, Leslie
Organic Carrots, Monroe Family Organics, Alma
Organic Cucumber, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt
Green Tomatoes, Peckham Farms, Lansing
Organic Spring Mix, Monroe Family Organics, Alma
Organic Lavender, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Add-Ons

Eggs, Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte
Bread, Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt
Maple Syrup, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, Chesaning
Chevre, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga
Cheese, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga
Kombucha, Apple Blossom Kombucha, Lansing
Coffee, The 517 Coffee Company, Lansing
Organic Pinto Beans, Ferris Organic Farm, Eaton Rapids
Meat, Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte
Pork, Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte
Beef, Heffron Farms Market, Belding
Chicken, Heffron Farms Market, Belding

Recipes and Tips!

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!



Lavender Mint Simple Syrup

1 cup loosely pack Veggie Box mint leaves

1 tablespoon Veggie Box lavender buds

2 cups sugar

2 cups water

Bring sugar, water, mint leaves, and dried lavender buds to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring just until sugar dissolves. Boil 2 minutes. (Do not stir.) Remove from heat. Press through a wire-mesh strainer into a bowl, using back of a spoon to squeeze out liquid; discard solids. Cool completely (about 30 minutes). Transfer to a jar; cover and refrigerate up to 3 months.

Southern-Styled Collard Greens

Veggie Box collard greens, sliced 3in strips

1 small yellow onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced (Veggie Box garlic scapes from last week)

2 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

Red pepper flakes (to taste)

Dash of hot sauce

Apple cider vinegar (to taste)

1 cup vegetable broth

Veggie box bacon, sliced 1/2in pieces (optional)

Heat a large skillet on medium heat. Cook the bacon until it begins to brown around edges. Add the onions and cook until softened and starting to brown. Add the garlic, salt, pepper, sugar, and red pepper flakes until fragrant. Add the collard greens, broth, vinegar, and hot sauce and bring to a simmer. Reduce to medium-low heat and stir occasionally until the collard greens wilt and lose their brightness.

Green Tomato Salsa Verde

1 lb green tomatoes (all from this week's Veggie Box)

1/2 medium white onion diced

1 or 2 serrano peppers thinly sliced (mine were super hot, so I only used 1)

1/2 tsp salt or to taste

1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro

1 tbsp lime juice or to taste

Halve the green tomatoes and slice out the interior section around the stem, then cut in half again to make quarters. Lay out the tomatoes on a baking sheet lined with foil. Turn on the broiler in your oven and set the baking sheet on a top rack a few inches from the flames. Broil for about 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Meanwhile, add the diced onions to a bowl and fill with cold water to soak for 5 to 10 minutes. Add the broiled green tomatoes to your food processor and pulse a few times to break them into pieces. Drain the water from the onion and add it along with the peppers, salt, cilantro, and lime juice. Pulse a few more times, until the desired texture is reached. Taste for seasoning and add more salt and lime juice if desired. The green tomato salsa can be served immediately, but it's even better after an hour or more in the fridge for the flavors to meld.