

# Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 7, July 13

We know you love to support local food since you're reading this, but what about when you go out to eat? Are you thinking about where that food is coming from, too? Sourcing local is not simply a trend, but rather has become a key component of many restaurants' endeavors to ensure fresh and tasty ingredients, promote environmental sustainability, and most importantly, support local businesses. Indeed, some of the greatest chefs around the world are now deeply involved in this locally-sourced philosophy, taking responsibility for their ecological footprint and making big strides in introducing more sustainable practices into their restaurants. The Farm to Table movement focuses on producing food locally and then transferring that food to local restaurants. On top of the food being fresher and healthier, benefits of a locally sourced restaurant include boosting the economy by keeping money local, contributes to a sustainable agricultural economy and workforce, and creates shorter transport distances which reduce green house gas emissions. Most restaurants that source locally are also locally owned. When you are supporting these restaurants, you are supporting the families of Lansing, too. Some of our favorite locally sourced restaurants in Lansing are Red Haven, Tannin, The Soup Spoon Cafe, and the People's Kitchen! What other locally sourced restaurants do you know of?

## Producer Spotlight

### *Hunter Park GardenHouse*

The Hunter Park GardenHouse, a project of Allen Neighborhood Center, is a hub for year-round farm & garden education, where neighbors volunteer to grow food, flowers, and community, and youth develop job and life skills in service to the neighborhood. Since 2008, the Hunter Park GardenHouse has empowered neighbors to grow, prepare, and eat healthy food to better their health and become better connected with the community.

## 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 Salad Mix**, Monroe Family Organics, Alma  
**Organic Pepper**, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt  
**Onions**, Peckham Farms, Lansing  
**Kale**, Magnolia Farms, Lansing  
**Organic Fennel**, CBI's Giving Tree Farm, Lansing  
**Tomato**, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing  
**Summer Squash**, Peckham Farms, Lansing  
**Blueberries**, Felzke Farms, Dewitt

## Add-Ons

**Bread**, Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt  
**Meat**, Grazing Feilds Cooperative, Charlotte  
**Eggs**, Heffron Farms Market, Belding  
**Coffee**, The 517 Coffee Company, Lansing  
**Cheese**, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga  
**Chevre**, Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga  
**Meat Variety**, Heffron Farms Market, Belding  
**Chicken**, Heffron Farms Market, Williamston  
**Beef**, Heffron Farms Market, Belding  
**Pork**, Grazing Feilds Cooperative, Charlotte

# Recipes and Tips!

## Summer Squash Casserole

2 tablespoons butter  
2 cups sliced Veggie Box Summer Squash  
Veggie Box Onion, chopped  
1 large egg  
1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese  
1/2 cup milk  
pinch cayenne pepper (optional)  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
1/2 sleeve Ritz crackers

**Preheat oven to 350° F. Melt 1 tbsp butter in a medium skillet over medium-low heat. Add squash and onions and cook until tender. Add egg, and lightly whisk. Add cheese and milk and whisk until well combined. Add cooked squash and onions to the egg mixture and stir well to combine. Melt remaining tbsp butter in skillet used to cook squash and onions. Add cayenne pepper, along with salt and pepper. Stir well to combine. Grease a 9x13 casserole dish and pour the mixture into the baking dish. Top evenly with crushed Ritz crackers. Bake casserole for 45 minutes or until the top has lightly browned. Allow to sit for 3 minutes before serving.**

## Blueberry Compote

Veggie Box blueberries  
3 tablespoons water  
1/4 cup sugar  
2 teaspoons lemon juice

**Combine 1 cup of the blueberries, water, sugar, and lemon juice in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes. Add the rest of the blueberries and cook for 8 minutes more, stirring frequently. Serve warm on pancakes, or over ice cream!**



## 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 or dill, 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.**



## Fennel & Potato Gratin

3 tablespoons butter  
1 onion, sliced  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1 1/4 cups half-and-half  
1/2 (10-oz.) block sharp white Cheddar cheese, shredded  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 1/2 pounds of potatoes (from last week!) thinly sliced  
Veggie Box fennel bulb, thinly sliced

**Preheat oven to 400°. Melt butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add onion ; sauté 2 to 3 minutes or until tender. Add garlic, and sauté 1 minute. Whisk in flour; cook, whisking constantly, 1 minute. Gradually whisk in half-and-half; cook, whisking constantly, 3 to 4 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat. Whisk in cheese until melted and smooth. Stir in salt and next 2 ingredients. Layer potato and fennel slices alternately in a lightly greased, broiler-safe ceramic 2-qt. casserole dish. Spread cheese sauce over layers. Cover with aluminum foil. Bake at 400° for 50 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove from oven. Increase oven temperature to broil with oven rack 5 inches from heat. Uncover dish, and broil 2 to 4 minutes or until golden brown.**