

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 6, April 5

Welcome to week 6 of the Spring Veggie Box! This spring has been of to a cold start - so how do our farmers keep growing our fresh, delicious produce right here in Mid-Michigan? The answer is... drum roll please!... hoopouses and greenhouses! A hoopouse is a series of large hoops or bows—made of metal, plastic pipe or wood—covered with a layer of heavy greenhouse plastic. The plastic is stretched tight and fastened to baseboards with strips of wood, metal or wire. A hoopouse is heated by the sun and cooled by the wind. Greenhouses tend to be similar in size to hoopouses or larger, often with more structural strength. They may or may not have a permanent foundation. They are covered with one or two layers of greenhouse plastic, rigid polycarbonate, or glass. Greenhouses often have supplemental heat from a furnace or boiler, and automated ventilation with fans. John Biernbaum, MSU professor of horticulture, catalyzed the use of hoopouses in Michigan through extensive production research beginning in 2001. From this emerged the MSU Student Organic Farm (SOF) in 2003. So next time you're wondering how your tasty and delicious produce stays that way throughout different seasons we can thank these crafty little structures for keeping the frost out and the flavor in!

Producer Spotlight

Monroe Family Organics

Monroe Family Organics is very much the fruition of a dream set in motion almost 20 years ago, & finally realized in 2011. After having a stall at the local Alma farmers market the summer he was 16, Fred Monroe was hooked on organic vegetable production. So off he went to Michigan State to earn his bachelor's degree in horticulture & agribusiness. During this time he worked at MSUSOF and interned at Angelic Organics, a very large CSA farm south of Chicago (where he met his wife Michele). In 2010, Fred & Michele set to work acquiring land, buying a house, & rounding up equipment for the first farm season. Over the next few years, they continued to add more crops, more animals, more CSA drop-offs, more delivery options, and more local mid-Michigan store and restaurant partners. 2022 marks Monroe Family Organics' twelfth season.

Crop Profile

Scallions

Scallions are actually baby, immature onions that are picked before they fully grow. The bulb is younger and is cut while the tops are still green. There are slight age differences and bulb types between scallions and green onions (green onions have a larger bulb), but they are often considered the same. Since scallions really consist of two parts, the white bottoms and the green shoots on top, scallions are a uniquely versatile vegetable with two distinct flavors. The flavor of the bottom white section most resembles the flavor of an onion, though it is less pungent and more sweet. Although it's the most potent part of the scallion, even served raw, as a garnish or ingredient in a salad, it is generally mild enough for most pallets. The green part is distinctively oniony but with an additional fresh, grassy flavor.



What's in the Box?

Baby Bok Choi, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing
Carrots, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing
Organic Scallions, Monroe Family Organics, Alma
Organic Beets, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt
Organic Spinach, Monroe Family Organics, Alma

Add-Ons

Bread, Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt
Meat, Heffron Farms Market, Belding

Recipes and Tips!

Carrot Top Pesto

1 cup packed Veggie Box carrot top greens, tough stems removed
1 cup packed Veggie Box spinach
1 large clove garlic, roughly chopped
1/2 cup roasted unsalted cashews, or walnuts
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Rinse the carrot top greens to dislodge any dirt. Pick out and discard any dry, yellowed, or otherwise unappetizing looking leaves. Discard tough stems. Place the carrot tops greens, baby spinach, chopped garlic, roasted cashews, salt, and pepper in a food processor. Pulse several times. Scrape the sides down with a rubber spatula. While the food processor is running, slowly pour in the olive oil in a steady stream. Scrape the sides down with a rubber spatula. Pulse until smooth.

Veggie Box Udon Stir Fry

Veggie Box Baby (some, very baby) Bok Choi, chopped
Veggie Box carrots, sliced
3 cloves of garlic (from last week)
1 inch of ginger, grated
5 oz of Veggie Box Spinach (all of this week's spinach)
1 lb fresh Udon Noodles
1 Tbsp Sesame Oil
3 Tbsp Soy Sauce
1 1/2 tsp of lemon juice
2 tsp fresh chili paste or sriracha (or to taste)
splash of vegetable oil
4 eggs
Veggie Box scallions, sliced thin

Put vegetable oil in wok or large frying pan, and turn on medium heat. Begin by adding in the diced white parts of the scallions, and the minced garlic. Then, add in the sliced carrots and fry for a few minutes until they begin to soften. Add in the baby bok choi. Turn the heat up to medium high, sauté for a few minutes more, and then add in your fresh udon noodles and ginger. Pour the sesame oil, soy sauce, lemon juice and chili paste/sriracha. Add the spinach on top and mix in. Fry until the spinach is wilted and everything is incorporated. Fry an egg and serve on top, garnished with scallions!

Beet Salad with Balsamic Vinaigrette

Balsamic Vinaigrette:

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon dijon mustard
1 garlic clove finely minced
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
small dollop of honey (to taste)

Salad:

Veggie Box Beets
Veggie Box spinach
1/4 cup pecans
1/3 cup dried cranberries
1/3 cup feta cheese

Preheat oven to 400 F. Peel and dice beets, toss in oil and cook for 30-45 minutes depending on size. Toast pecans in a dry skillet, tossing until golden. Add spinach to large mixing bowl, along with beets, cheese, pecans, and cranberries. In a mason jar, combine all dressing ingredients and shake well to combine and add to the salad to taste. If not serving salad right away, shake the dressing again just before drizzling over the salad.

Scallion Pancakes - Cong You Bing (葱油饼)

For the dough

all-purpose flour, about 2 cups + extra for dusting
boiling water, 2/3 cup

For the filling

2 tablespoon lard, melted, or coconut oil
2 tablespoon plain flour
1/4 teaspoon ground Sichuan pepper, or Chinese five-spice powder
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
Veggie Box scallions (as many as you want)

For frying

2 tablespoon cooking oil

Put the flour into a heatproof bowl. Pour in boiling water. Stir with a pair of chopsticks or a fork until the flour turns into small lumps and no more water can be seen. When cool enough to handle, knead the mixture into a soft, smooth dough. Leave to rest for 30 mins. Prepare the filling - Mix flour, ground Sichuan pepper (or five-spice powder), salt with melted lard (or coconut oil). Finely chop the scallions. Knead the dough again. Then flatten it with a rolling pin into a thin rectangle shape (dust with flour to avoid sticking). Evenly brush the lard mixture on the dough. Sprinkle scallions over. Roll the dough into a rope (from the shorter side). Cut into 4 cylinders. Stand a piece on one end. Roll it flat to the desired thickness, the diameter of the pancake should be about 5 inches. Heat up oil in a frying pan over a high heat. Place the pancakes in then turn the heat to medium. Flip over 2-3 times. Cook until both sides are golden brown.