

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 8, April 19

Welcome to the eighth week of the Spring Veggie Box! As interest in native plants and local food blossoms in Michigan, foraging has become trendy. But what does foraging mean to your average person? Does foraging connect people with nature or encourage them to pillage it? Oftentimes, people view foraged food found out in nature as fair game and theirs for the taking - it is just growing wild, and it would either rot or animals would eat it, right? Natural ecosystems are much more complex than one might think. These habitats that have existed and adapted for thousands of years have many moving parts that all rely on one another to survive and maintain this sense of equilibrium. This is not to say that all foraging is wrong, but rather that we must be mindful in how we forage, and how we give back. Before taking any native plant from its ecosystem, you should not only know how to positively identify the plant, but also understand: Its role in the ecosystem; Its life cycle; How scarce it is, overall and locally; How long it will take to recover the part that you took from it; and what other living things use and need the plant. We can give back by planting native plants, seeds, and spores to make up for what we take. Plus, there are many invasive plants that do a lot of harm, but are also edible! For example, garlic mustard. Garlic mustard is a threat to the biodiversity of many native ecosystems. This plant spreads its seeds in the wind and gains a foothold in fields and forests by emerging earlier in spring than many native plants. By the time native species are ready to grow, garlic mustard has blocked their sunlight and outcompeted them for moisture and vital nutrients. Check out Fenner Nature Center to pull out this weed by the roots, but also make some tasty pesto. How else might we forage sustainably? How else can we decolonize the way we interact with the Earth? Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Agape Organic Farms

Agape Organic Farm is a small, black-owned family farm out of Dansville, Michigan. Their mission is to grow quality food while being good stewards of the land and their animals. They raise purebred Berkshire pigs on pasture, 28 varieties of mushrooms in season, and also sell foraged mushrooms when available. The farm also grows and sells live organic microgreens, garlic, shallots, and herbs grown on their own mushroom compost. The farm is run by Shara Trierweiler and her two children, Philomena and Dominic.

Crop Profile

Oyster Mushrooms

The Latin name *pleurotus ostreatus* means "sideways oyster" referring to the oyster-like shape of the mushroom. These blue oysters are a subspecies of the oysters that grow in the wild here in Michigan. These mushrooms are mostly seen growing on dying hardwood trees - but they aren't the cause of the tree's demise. They act as a primary decomposer of wood; therefore, the species is a saprotroph (not a parasite). They live mostly on deciduous trees and beech trees as a white-rot wood-decay fungus. Oyster mushrooms benefit their surroundings by decomposing dead wood, thus returning vital minerals to the ecosystem. Oyster mushrooms can fruit throughout the year - even in the winter - under favorable conditions. Mushrooms store best in a paper bag where they can release some moisture. Oysters, in general have a mild, woody, earthy flavor. They are slightly sweet, with a hint of anise.



What's in the Box?

Organic Daikon Radishes, *Lake Divide Farm*, Stockbridge

Microgreens, *Hunter Park GardenHouse*, Lansing

Organic Oyster Mushrooms, *Agape Organic Farms*, Dansville

Organic Spring Onions, *Monroe Family Organics*, Alma

Organic Popcorn, *Ferris Organic Farms*, Eaton Rapids

Spinach, *Magnolia Farms*, Lansing

Organic Turnips, *Lake Divide Farm*, Stockbridge

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse*, Holt

Meat, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte

Recipes and Tips!

Pan-Fried Daikon Radish Bun - Luo Bo Si Bing

Dough

2 cups all-purpose flour

¾ cup lukewarm water

½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon oil

Filling

Veggie Box daikon radishes

Veggie Box turnips

3 oz firm tofu

Veggie Box oyster mushrooms

1 small carrot (from a previous box)

3 stalks Veggie Box green onions chopped

1 bunch dried mung bean vermicelli

a few splashes sesame oil toasted (see link)

Seasoning

1 tablespoon soy sauce plus more to taste

1 teaspoon sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

⅛ teaspoon Chinese 5-spice powder

⅛ teaspoon ground white pepper

Make the dough

To make the dough, combine flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir to combine. Stir while adding the water. Add the oil and knead until a soft dough forms, about 3-4 minutes. Note: the dough is sticky but you should be able to gather the dough together. If not, add a little more flour, one tablespoon at a time. Cover the bowl with a lid and let it rest for 30 minutes.

Prepare the filling

To make the filling, soften the mung bean vermicelli by immersing it in hot boiling water, about 5-8 minutes. Then, cut them into tinier threads. Meanwhile, drain the tofu with dish towels or gently press it in between your palms to remove the tofu water. Then, cut it into tiny cubes. Next, prepare the mushrooms by dicing. Set it aside. Shred the carrot using a grater with a smaller shredding hole. Now, clean the daikon radish and turnip and peel off the outer skin with a vegetable peeler. Set a grater on top of a large bowl and shred the daikon using the large shredding holes. Then, massage the shreds with a teaspoon of salt and set them aside for about 20-30 minutes. This step is to draw out the moisture. To cook the filling, heat a large non-stick pan with ½ tablespoon of oil. Sauté mushrooms until fragrant, push them to the side of the pan. Pan-fry the tofu cubes until golden brown, adding more oil if needed. Add the carrot and sauté for about 30-45 seconds. Season with ¼ teaspoon of salt. Turn off the heat and let it cool down. Once the radishes & turnips

have softened and the water has released, place them in a tea towel or cheesecloth. Wring out as much liquid as possible, do it in small batches as needed.

Transfer the squeezed radish/turnip into a bowl. If they appear to have a large strand, cut or chop them into smaller bits. Add the cooked mushrooms, carrot, and tofu into the same bowl followed by softened mung bean vermicelli and green onions. Then, mix it with the seasoning until well-combined. Divide it into 8 portions.

Assemble the bun

To make the buns, dust the work surface and the rolling pin with flour. Please note: this is a very soft and sticky dough, so rub your palms with flour as well. Take a dough and flatten it with your palm. Using a rolling pin, roll the dough out to a 5"-6" circular wrapper, keeping the middle thicker and side thinner. Place a portion of the filling in the middle. Lift two sides of the dough and bring it to the middle and pinch to seal. While holding this pinch, gently pull a side of the dough and bring it to the middle. Repeat until all sides are in the middle. Pinch it together and seal it tightly. Turn it over and adjust the dough into a round bun.

Cook the bun

To cook the buns, heat a non-stick pan and add about 3 teaspoons of oil. Add the buns, seamed side down, slightly apart. Cover the pan with a lid, and pan-fry the bottom until golden brown, about 3-4 minutes. It's normal that the buns puff up during cooking. Uncover, flip the buns over, and cover with a lid then continue to cook for another 3-4 minutes. Peek the buns occasionally to prevent them from burning. To check if the buns are fully cooked through, poke the side of the bun slightly with your finger. If it bounces back, then, they are ready.

Spicy Roasted Daikon "French Fries"

Veggie Box daikon, peeled & cut into matchsticks

2 1/2 tablespoons of canola or grapeseed oil

3/4 teaspoon chile paste

1/2 teaspoon Tamari or soy sauce

1/4 teaspoon ginger pulp, freshly grated

1/4 teaspoon granulated sugar

1/4 teaspoon sea salt

Preheat the oven to 475, and adjust a rack to the center. Cut the daikon radishes into 1/4 inch thick sticks. Add all of the daikon slices to a baking sheet and set aside. Then, in a small bowl, combine the oil, chile paste, Tamari or soy sauce, ginger, sugar and salt. Drizzle this over the daikon and then use your hands to toss them until they're all evenly coated and in a single layer. Place them in the oven and roast until they are golden brown on all sides, about 30 minutes. (You should gently toss/flip them about halfway through the cooking time.)