

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 10, May 5

Welcome to week 10 of the Spring Veggie Box! Have you ever wondered why maple syrup is more expensive and tastier than store-bought pancake syrup? Pure maple syrup is made from maple tree sap that's been boiled down to reduce water content, thereby concentrating the sugars. Caramelization gives it a rich color and flavor. It takes approximately 43 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup! Pure maple syrup also contains some nutrients, such as riboflavin, calcium, zinc, and potassium. Most of the pancake syrup sold in grocery stores is actually highly processed, with the primary ingredient being corn syrup or high-fructose corn syrup. These syrups also contain added colors, flavorings, and preservatives. The exact origins of maple syrup production are unknown, but legends and stories have been passed down by numerous Indigenous tribes of tapping ininaatig - the sugar maple - and turning the sap into syrup. The maple tree was of particular importance to the Algonquian tribes of the northwestern United States and western Canada, who developed the art of processing maple sap into maple sugar, maple syrup, and taffy candy. Maple sap was often considered a gift from the Creator and/or the culture hero, and many aspects of Algonquian culture and tradition came to revolve around maple sugaring. For these reasons, the maple leaf symbol was an important design motif in Algonquian beadwork. Today, the US produces about a quarter of the world's syrup, while Canada produces the remaining 3 quarters. Buying local maple syrup is a more nutritious option than conventional syrup, and it supports your local farmers (and local tribes - there are many Michigan-based Indigenous groups who tap, boil, bottle, and sell maple syrup!). Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

MSU Student Organic Farm

The MSU Student Organic Farm is a 15 acre year-round educational, organic farm located in Holt, MI about 3 miles south of the Michigan State University campus. Started in 1999 by students who desired a more hands-on learning experience, the farm now offers a nearly year-long intensive program for those interested in learning everything they can about organic farming. Not only do the students tend to the fields, but the program also involves caring for the farm's livestock. MSU's multiple cafeterias source as much produce as they can from the MSUSOF and they also offer a weekly farm stand in the middle of campus for students and public alike.

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 Radishes, *Monroe Family Organics*, Alma

Cup Plant Leaves, *Hunter Park GardenHouse*, Lansing

Organic Spinach, *MSU Student Organic Farm*, Holt

Ramps, *Monroe Family Organics*, Alma

Organic Green Garlic, *MSU Student Organic Farm*, Holt

Bok Choi, *Hunter Park GardenHouse*, Lansing

Organic Chives, *MSU Student Organic Farm*, Holt

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse*, Holt

Meat, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding

Honey, *Beebehavior Ranch*, Ovid

Maple Syrup, *Tomac Pumpkin Patch*, Chesaning

Recipes and Tips!

Ramp Butter

2 sticks of unsalted butter, room temperature
Veggie Box ramps
1/2 of Veggie Box chives
1/2 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon lemon zest, grated finely
Kosher salt, to taste
Fresh ground black pepper

Trim the root end and wash ramps very thoroughly. Chop up the ramps and sautee them in a small bit of butter for a few minutes until cooked. Let them cool. In a food processor, add the ramps, salt, pepper, butter, lemon zest, juice and chives. Process until they reach the texture you want. You can pack compound butter into air-tight containers or even ramekins and store them in the refrigerator for about a week. 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.

Spring Frittata

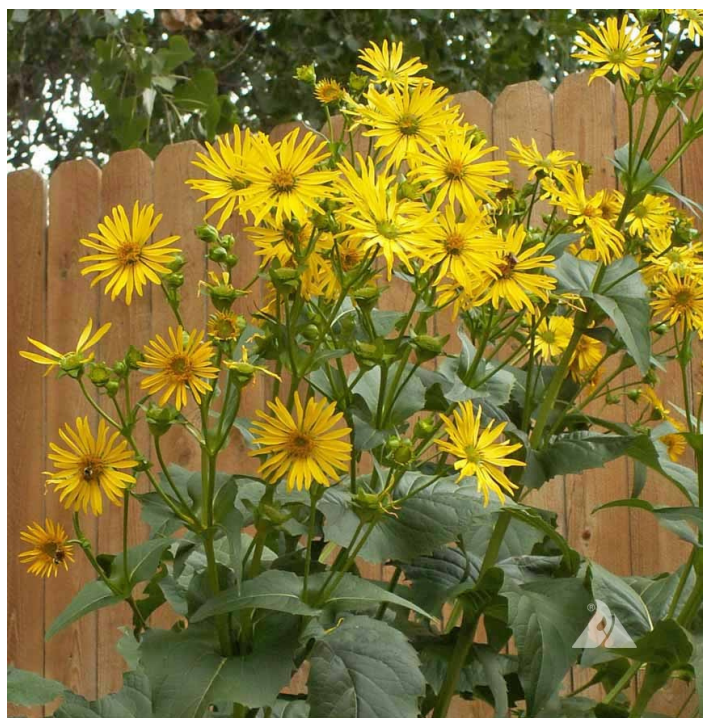
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1/2 pound potatoes, sliced 1/4-inch thick
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Veggie Box ramps, well cleaned, bulb ends and greens thinly sliced
Veggie Box cup plant leaves, blanched and drained
Veggie Box spinach
8 large eggs
1/4 cup Boursin or other soft cheese, like goat cheese
1/2 cup shredded cheddar
Veggie Box chives

Preheat oven to 375°F. Heat the olive oil and butter in a 9-inch oven-safe sauté pan over medium heat. Cook potatoes until done and somewhat crispy. Use your stirring utensil to coarsely mash the potatoes once they are soft enough, then add the ramps, spinach, green garlic, and cup plant leaves, and sauté until they soften, about 2 minutes. Spread the mixture into an even layer in the base of the pan, and keep the heat on medium-low. Whip the eggs in a medium bowl until they are fairly frothy—don't just whisk to combine. Season the egg mixture with salt and pepper. Pour the egg into the sauté pan, and leave undisturbed for 2 minutes. Sprinkle the Boursin (or goat cheese) all over the surface of the frittata, then sprinkle the cheddar evenly over the surface. Transfer to the oven and bake until the eggs are set, 10 to 12 minutes. If desired, turn on the broiler to help get the cheese on top even more brown for 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for 5 minutes. Top with minced chives.

The Cup Plant

Silphium perfoliatum is a very tall, dramatic plant in the aster family with opposite leaves that form a cup around the stem to hold water for insects and birds, hence its common name. It's one of the tallest native plants. In Michigan, it can often be found in floodplain forests.

You probably wouldn't guess that this plant is edible when you first glimpse it in the spring, but some of the earliest tasty greens of the year come from young cup plants. Leaves for people can be harvested in April and May, blanched and used immediately in recipes or frozen for later use.



Ramp Pesto

1 bunch of Veggie Box ramps
1/2 of Veggie Box green garlic (white and light green parts)
1/4 cup walnuts (toasted)
1/3 cup olive oil (you kind of have to eyeball it)
1/3 cup grated parmigiano reggiano cheese (also eyeball it?)
sea salt
pepper
a squirt of lemon

In 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! If you are planning on freezing the pesto to store for later use, make sure to quickly sautee the ramps before adding to the food processor