

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 4, June 23

Welcome to week four of the Summer Veggie Box! When talking about our food system, a topic that often comes up is the racial injustice within it. The food system we know today was built on the mistreatment of people of color; beginning with the taking of land from indigenous people to the enslavement of Black folks to work in the fields, and the ongoing mistreatment of Latinx farm workers - this is a system built on control and corruption. For centuries, the capitalist food system that we primarily know has concentrated its power in the hands of the privileged few and pushed social and environmental injustices primarily onto racially stigmatized groups. In the early 20th century, Black Americans owned nearly 16 million acres of farmland, by 1997 there was as little as 2 million acres owned. Farms are predominantly run by white farmers whereas farm workers are disproportionately people of color. These workers are often paid poverty level wages and experience high levels of food insecurity, wage theft and harassment. Race, poverty and food insecurity are all interconnected. Recognizing racism in our food system is an important step in creating a system that is rooted in equity. There is no food justice without racial justice. 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

Tokyo Bekana

Tokyo Bekana is a loose-headed, lightweight cabbage that is often mistaken for lettuce due to its similarities in flavor and appearance. Tokyo Bekana is crisp and tender with a mild, sweet, and spinach-like flavor with mild pepper nuances. Tokyo Bekana cabbage is best suited for both raw and cooked applications such as sautéing, steaming, and stir-frying. The frilly green is mild, lacking in traditional cabbage flavors, and can be shredded and tossed into green salads, mixed into pasta dishes for added crispness, braised as a side dish, or sliced and added to soups. Tokyo Bekana cabbage can also be lightly stir-fried and mixed with cooked vegetables and meat, used as a lettuce wrap, or pickled into a sweet and spicy condiment. Tokyo Bekana cabbage pairs well with mushrooms, fennel, tomatoes, cucumber, avocado, potatoes, onions, ginger, garlic, herbs such as thyme, basil, and mint, parmesan cheese, cherries, grapefruit, and peaches. The cabbage will keep up to one week when stored in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator.

ALLEN

Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Organic Swiss Chard, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Strawberries, Felzke Farms, Dewitt

Salad Mix, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing

Organic Green Garlic (with garlic scapes still attached!), Cinzori Farms, Ceresco

Organic Tokyo Bekana, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

English Thyme Plant Start, Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing

Organic Green Onions, Cinzori Farms, Ceresco

Add-Ons

Bread, Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt

Meat, Heffron Farms Market, Belding

Recipes and Tips!

Caring for your English Thyme Plant

A low-growing hardy perennial, thyme is a fragrant herb with small, fragrant leaves and thin, woody stems. The culinary varieties are evergreen. Thyme comes in over fifty varieties with different fragrances and flavors. Fresh or English thyme are used most often in cooking. Originally from the Mediterranean area, this herb is drought-friendly so it doesn't have high watering needs. It is also pollinator-friendly! Let some thyme plants flower, since the herb attracts the bees. Thyme can grow in the ground or in a container. Either is left outside in wintertime. New leaves will emerge within the early spring.

Thyme thrives in full sun and loves heat. If you are growing in a pot indoors, plant near a sunny window. Water deeply only when the soil is completely dry, and prune the plants back in the spring and summer to contain the growth. If planted outside, remember to lightly mulch around the plants after the ground freezes.

Creamed Chard & Spring Onion Pasta

Veggie Box swiss chard, stems removed and diced, and greens cut into thin ribbons
2 Veggie Box green garlics, thinly sliced (whites and light green parts only)
Veggie Box green onions, diced
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons flour
2 cups milk
salt + pepper to taste
1/2 cup finely grated parmesan, plus more for serving
1/2 lb pasta

Cook pasta according to package directions in a large pot of salted water. Drain and reserve. In a pot, melt the butter and sautee the swiss chard stems, covered, for a few minutes. Then add in the onion and swiss chard greens and cook for another minute or two. Finally add the green garlic and whisk in flour. Cook roux about 4 minutes, whisking occasionally. Stream in the warm milk, and cook for about 4 more minutes, whisking constantly until sauce is thickened. Mix in parmesan and stir until smooth. Add the cooked pasta and taste and adjust salt and pepper. Serve with extra parmesan.

Spicy Stir-Fried Tokyo Bekana

Veggie Box green garlic (or garlic scapes), minced
2 teaspoons minced ginger
2 teaspoons of sriracha sauce, or to taste
2 1/2 teaspoons soy sauce (more to taste)
2 tablespoons of rice vinegar
Drizzle of honey
2 tablespoons peanut or canola oil
2-3 carrots, sliced
Veggie Box Tokyo Bekana, chopped roughly
1 pound of tofu or choice of meat, cubed
Veggie Box green onions
Salt to taste

Heat a 14-inch flat-bottomed wok or a 12-inch skillet over high heat until a drop of water evaporates within a second or two when added to the pan. Swirl in the oil by adding it to the sides of the pan and tilting it back and forth. Add the garlic, whites of the green onions, ginger, and sriracha. Stir-fry for a few seconds, just until fragrant, then add the tofu and fry for several minutes. Then add the Tokyo Bekana and carrots. Stir-fry for one to two minutes until the cabbage begins to wilt, then add the salt and wine/soy sauce mixture. Turn off the heat and let the cabbage sit for 5 to 10 minutes to absorb flavors. Uncover and stir-fry for another minute on high heat. Serve with rice or noodles, and top with a drizzle of sesame oil and the diced green onions.

Quick Strawberry Jam

1 quart hulled strawberries
1/3-1/2 cup sugar
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Add sliced strawberries lemon juice and sugar to a wide skillet, and mash with a fork or potato masher as it cooks. Cook over medium-high, stirring frequently, until jam is thickened and bubbles completely cover surface, 9 to 10 minutes (cook a little longer if it still needs to thicken, and note that it thickens more when refrigerated!) Transfer jam to a jar and let cool to room temperature. (To store, seal jar and refrigerate, up to 10 days).