

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 9, July 28

Welcome to week 9 of the Summer Veggie Box! Fermentation is the process of bacteria or yeasts breaking down carbohydrates in different foods into alcohol or acids. Lactic acid fermentation relies on beneficial cultures – similar to those used to make yogurt or sourdough bread – to break down natural sugars in the vegetables and produce a variety of healthful substances, primarily lactic acid. The process begins with fresh, nutrient-rich vegetables, naturally bearing lactic acid cultures on their surfaces (making starter cultures or inoculants unnecessary). The produce is washed, chopped or sliced as needed, and mixed with sea salt. The salt acts to draw out juices, preserve the vegetables while the fermentation gets started, and regulate the fermentation process itself. The mixture is packed into air-tight fermentation vessels (jars, crocks, or barrels) and placed in a warm spot (65-80 deg F). Why ferment food? Depending on what you ferment it can help extend the shelf life and several fermented foods are said to have health benefits. Many fermented foods like yogurt, kombucha, kefir, and specific sauerkrauts have probiotics which are great for gut health and digestion. They work by increasing the good bacteria in your gut to help fight off bad bacteria. Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Cinzori Farms

Cinzori Farms is part of an Agriculture Cooperative and was one of the first farms in Michigan to become organically certified in 1985. The farm has grown a great deal since it was first established, and now occupies more than 60 acres – all of which are used to propagate fresh herbs and produce. Cinzori Farms is owned and operated by father and son, Don and Anthony Cinzori, and sells at a number of Michigan farmers markets, as well as Michigan grocery stores.

Crop Profile

Swiss Chard

Native to the Mediterranean region, Swiss chard is one of the most nutritious vegetables around, ranking second only to spinach in many studies of nutrient richness. Containing at least 13 different antioxidants, eating Swiss chard can help your body regulate blood sugar and reduce inflammation. Aside from multiple health benefits, Swiss chard is simply delicious! When boiled, braised, juiced, steamed, or sautéed, chard leaves have a wonderfully rich flavor while the stems may be slightly sweeter. The plant is a derivative of the beet, so you may find it tastes similar to beet greens or spinach.

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Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Organic Swiss Chard, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt*

Organic Potatoes, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Summer Squash, *Peckham Farms, Lansing*

Blueberries, *Felzke Farms, Dewitt*

Cherry Tomatoes, *Peckham Farms, Lansing*

Organic Pickling Cucumbers, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Dill Heads, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Garlic, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Organic Beets, *Green Wagon Farms, Ada*

Add-Ons

Eggs, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt*

Chevre, *Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga*

Cheese, *Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga*

Kombucha, *Apple Blossom Kombucha, Lansing*

Navy Beans, *Ferris Organic Farm, Eaton Rapids*

Coffee, *The 517 Coffee Company, Lansing*

Meat, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*

Pork, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Beef, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*

Chicken, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*

Recipes and Tips!

Veggie Box Pickles

- Veggie Box cucumbers - 1 pound
- Enough brine to cover all your cucumbers. The ratio is one heaping teaspoon fine sea salt (7 grams) per one cup of water, for a 3% brine. (non-chlorinated- tap water may have chlorine which can inhibit fermentation)
- 2 tablespoons of pickling spices (you can buy pickling spices, or make your own! It includes: mustard seed, whole allspice, coriander seeds, whole cloves, ground ginger, crumbled bay leaf, and red pepper flakes).
- 4 cloves of Veggie Box garlic cloves, sliced (or double for extra garlicky)
- Veggie Box fresh dill heads

Rinse the cucumbers, remove the flower end of each cucumber and place them in an ice-water bath, to crisp them up (10-20 minutes). Leave them whole. Make the salt water brine. In a large, clean jar (or two if need be!) place all the whole spices into the bottom. Pack one layer of cucumbers tightly, standing on end, then add garlic, and fresh dill sprigs. Press everything down, leaving an inch of headroom. Pour the salt water brine over top and weigh down the cukes with fermentation weights so they are submerged under the brine, leaving an inch of headroom, in the jar. (Use a fermentation weight, or a small ziplock bag with a little water in it). Cover the jar loosely with a lid or with a cloth- basically, you want air to be able to escape. Place the jar in a pan or bowl to collect any overflow and leave it in a dark place (below 70F) for 3-7 days (a basement, or lower kitchen cupboard). It's recommended to check for signs of life every day: bubbles, and clouding. Tap the jar, and see if tiny bubbles rise to the top. Longer ferments will yield tangier pickles but will get softer as they ferment, and lose their vibrant color. Up to you. You can taste them at any point after you see bubbles, and ferment longer if you like. The brine will get cloudy as it ferments- this is a good sign! Once you see active bubbles, you can at this point place the jar in the fridge, where it will continue to ferment, but much more slowly. Keep the pickles submerged.

Veggie Box Pizza

Pizza crust (store-bought or homemade, the world is your oyster)

Veggie Box swiss chard

Veggie Box summer squash

3 cloves of veggie box garlic

Veggie Box cherry tomatoes

Any other veggies you'd like to use as toppings!

Butter

Basil (from last week!)

Mozzarella and goat cheese

Preheat oven to 450F. Melt butter in a skillet and sautee your veggies (minus garlic and sliced cherry tomatoes) Place dough on baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil and crushed garlic, and a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Layer veggies, mozzarella, and goat cheese. Cook for 20 minutes or until cheese is golden brown.

Swiss Chard Steamed with Tomatoes & Garlic

Veggie Box Swiss Chard

3 Veggie Box garlic cloves - sliced

2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

Veggie Box cherry tomatoes, chopped

1/8 tsp. dried oregano

salt

Chop Swiss chard and rinse. On medium heat, add olive oil, red pepper flakes, and garlic. Saute garlic for 1 minute, to fragrant the olive oil, Do not brown the garlic. TURN off the heat! (Have the lid to the pot nearby).Toss in the wet chard, chopped tomatoes, oregano, and salt. Cover with the lid. Turn on the heat again to medium-low heat. Cook the Swiss chard covered for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The chard will shrink down as it cooks. Then uncover, and lower the heat to simmer the chard for a few minutes more, and to allow some of the liquid to evaporate. Taste and adjust the salt, if needed. Turn off heat and cover, let the chard stand and steam for 2 minutes more. Stems should be tender to the bite. Remove and transfer to a serving bowl or platter. Serve warm, and top with parmesan cheese if you desire!