

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 6, July 5

Welcome to week 6 of the Summer Veggie Box! You have probably heard of the term 'food desert' but what about 'food swamp'? Although related, the two are different issues and have unique health, environmental, and policy implications. A food desert is an area that, simply put, doesn't have access to healthy foods. This is defined in a number of ways, but most commonly means an urban area more than one mile from a grocery store, or rural area more than 10 miles. Food swamps, however, may have access to healthy, fresh foods and may have grocery stores, but healthy foods are outnumbered by fast food and other unhealthy options by at least a 1:4 ratio. So, for every one grocery store or place to get healthy foods, there are at least four unhealthy options. Food swamps are cropping up more and more in low-income and urban areas, and disproportionately impact People of Color and low-income individuals. Recent studies have shown that food swamps, when compared to food deserts, have much stronger correlations with obesity and other diet-related health conditions. There are a multitude of reasons for this, but most simply put, food swamps create an environment where it's hard to escape the pull of junk food. Constantly seeing unhealthy food options means that the brain's reward center is being repeatedly stimulated, causing the body to crave the sweet, salty, fatty foods that it knows it can easily have. Making the choice to seek out and eat a healthier option requires mental energy, and often the folks stuck in food swamps face these decisions over and over. Being forced to make these choices repeatedly and use that mental energy each time can result in a phenomenon called 'decision fatigue', when someone has to make many hard decisions and their ability to reason and make good decisions becomes weaker and weaker. Eating unhealthy foods can also impact our decision making since foods rich in fats and sugars can lead to chronic inflammation and poor gut health, which research has indicated may have a negative impact on brain chemistry leading to mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and poor mood regulation, all of which make choosing healthy options even more difficult.

Producer Spotlight

Highwater Farms

At Highwater Farms, their mission is to create a sustainable relationship between the land, their products, and their customers. They work to provide heirloom and rare varieties of produce and flowers to customers via several channels in order to ensure freshness, availability, and convenience. All of their plants are chemical-free, pesticide-free, and herbicide-free. All farming practices are strategically implemented to address the health and safety of the land and the consumer. They grow exclusively in Lansing and strive to give back 5% of all sales go to a rotating group of local charities and causes

Crop Profile

Kohlrabi

Kohlrabi is a hardy, annual vegetable that is primarily consumed in some European countries, although it has also become a staple vegetable in northern India. It is actually a cultivar of cabbage and was specifically bred as a hardier version of cruciferous vegetables, which often can't grow in as harsh of conditions. The small or large bulbous vegetable is encased in two harder shells of leaves, which typically do not soften when cooked. However, kohlrabi can be eaten raw or cooked and has been a staple of German cuisine for hundreds of years. You can use the kohlrabi root as well as the leaves in your diet. They both have significant amounts of nutrients and minerals like copper, potassium, manganese, iron, and calcium, as well as vitamins, such as vitamin C, B-complex vitamins, vitamin A, and vitamin K. Kohlrabi tastes somewhat like a broccoli stem, although somewhat more palatable, and is softer, even taking on the consistency of an apple at times. While the roots/stems are often used in salads in a similar way as carrots or broccoli.

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Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Organic Kohlrabi, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Strawberries, Felzke Farms, Dewitt

Beets, Ten Hens Farm, Bath

Basil, Magnolia Farms, Lansing

Organic Cucumber, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Microgreens, Highwater Farms, Lansing

Add-Ons

Bread, Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt

Meat, Heffron Farms Market, Belding

Recipes and Tips!

Kohlrabi Beet Fritters

2 cups of shredded Veggie Box beets, kohlrabi, and some onion (make sure you wring the heck out of the shredded veggies before you measure them!)
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped (or some of your garlic scapes!)
1 egg
a few tablespoons of flour
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon cayenne
½ cup vegetable oil (enough for ¼-inch depth in a large skillet)

Peel the kohlrabi and beets. Shred the roots and the onion in a food processor, or by hand using a grater. Squeeze the shredded vegetables in a tea cloth (or with your hands) to remove moisture - for the love of god, squeeze it out more than you think you should - then add to a medium bowl with the egg, kosher salt, garlic, and cayenne. Mix to combine. Add some flour if it appears too runny. Place the oil in a large skillet (enough for 1/4-inch depth). Heat the oil over medium high heat, then place small patties of the fritter mixture into the oil. Fry on one side until browned, then fry on the other side. Remove and place on a plate lined with a paper towel to drain excess oil. Serve with sour cream or an aioli sauce, and top with microgreens. Enjoy!

Strawberry, Cucumber, and Basil Salad

2 cups hulled Veggie Box strawberries, quartered
1 tablespoon thinly sliced Veggie Box basil
1 tablespoon mint (optional)
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1 Veggie Box cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise, and thinly sliced
1/2 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Combine first 4 ingredients in a large bowl, and toss gently to coat. Cover and chill for 1 hour. Combine cucumbers and juice; toss to coat. Add cucumber mixture, salt, and pepper to strawberry mixture; toss gently to combine. Serve immediately.

Roasted Beets with Feta and Basil

Veggie Box beets
2 tablespoons Veggie Box basil, cut into thin strips
1/4 cup feta cheese, crumbled
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, divided
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
Salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 350F degrees. Scrub beets well and dry, then coat each with a little olive oil. Place in an ovenproof pan, cover with foil and roast for 40-45 minutes, or until the beets are tender (a knife should easily go into the beets). Remove the beets from the oven and set aside until they are cool enough to handle. Remove the skin from the cooled beets and cut into bite sized pieces. Place the cut beets back in the pan and toss with 2 tablespoons each of balsamic vinegar and olive oil. Roast for an additional 10 minutes. Place the cooked beets in a large bowl. Add the basil with the remaining 1 tablespoon each of balsamic and olive oil and mix well. Add feta cheese and toss gently, then season to taste with salt and pepper.

Garlic Scape Pesto

Veggie Box garlic scapes
¼ cup walnuts, sunflower seeds, pine nuts, etc.
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup Parmesan cheese
¾ cup basil leaves
Juice of one lemon
salt and pepper to taste

Place the garlic scapes in a food processor and pulse for 30 seconds. Add the nuts and pulse for 30 seconds. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the olive oil and process on high for 15 seconds. Add the Parmesan cheese and pulse until the ingredients are combined. Add the basil and lemon juice, and process until reaching the desired consistency. Add salt to taste and serve immediately. Would be great on the kohlrabi and beet fritters!