

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 12, August 18

What's the difference between big agribusiness and small farms? Large farms can be more efficient due to monocropping and the use of large-scale machinery which additionally allows their products to be sold at a lower cost. Unfortunately, this is often at the expense of farmworkers and other food system workers who receive low wages. Large farms also tend to rely on chemical fertilizers and pesticides to restore soils depleted by unsustainable farming practices. Due to these chemicals not being handled responsibly, agriculture is the largest source of pollution in lakes and rivers. Small farms usually grow more types of produce while using less chemicals which both increases and conserves agricultural biodiversity. While research is inconclusive on whether small farms produce less greenhouse gas emissions than big agribusinesses, there is no doubt that they contribute

more to their communities by maintaining open land and reminding their neighbors where their food comes from. Thank you for helping foster a healthier environment and community by supporting our local farms!

Producer Spotlight

Ten Hens Farm

Adam and Dru Montri have been farming in Bath, Michigan since 2007 with their two daughters and three employees. Their produce is grown on three acres, in six hoopouses totaling over 17,000 sq ft and in one heated greenhouse. Dru and Adam both went to Michigan State and Penn State to study horticulture and worked together on numerous farms before starting Ten Hens Farm. They grow produce for the ANC Veggie Box program, Bath Farmers market, numerous Lansing area restaurants as well as CSA boxes in the greater Flint area. They are proud to have provided produce for the Veggie Box since the program started.

Crop Profile

Fennel

Fennel is a flowering plant in the carrot family that is native to the Mediterranean region. There are two main types of fennel: herb fennel and Florence fennel, or the Italian finocchio. Herb fennel's stems, seeds, and feathery leaves that look just like its cousin dill are all harvested and used. Florence fennel, however, is grown primarily for its large, bulb-like bottom that is eaten as a vegetable. Typically, the trimmed off green tops only garnish dishes. Regardless of type, fennel has a strong anise or licorice flavor. The crisp bulbs can be eaten raw by cutting into thin slices for salads and slaws. If it's cooked, the bulb's flavor becomes softer and more mellow. In various cultures, fennel has a long history for its uses as an herb, food source, and object in important rituals. It has also been considered one of the best carminatives, which are used to reduce gas, bloating, and nausea, and was baked or boiled along with other foods to make them easier to digest. Today, fennel is still used in many of the same ways and may make a helpful digestive aid in addition to being a delicious vegetable or spice.

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Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Organic Eggplants, *Owosso Organics, Owosso*

Organic Green Beans, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Corn, *Felzke Farms, Dewitt*

Organic Radishes, *Green Wagon Farm, Ada*

Basil, *Magnolia Farms, Lansing*

Organic Fennel, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt*

Sweet Peppers, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Organic Red Onions, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Organic Beets, *Green Wagon Farm, Ada*

Roma Tomatoes, *Peckham Farms, Lansing*

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt*

Meat, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*

Recipes and Tips!

Meatless Spaghetti Sauce with Fennel and Eggplant

4 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup Veggie Box fennel, finely chopped
1/2-1 Veggie Box onion, finely chopped
1-2 Veggie Box eggplant, cubed
1 garlic clove, chopped
Salt to taste
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 quart tomato sauce seeded, crushed tomatoes or chopped fresh tomatoes
Parmesan, pecorino or mizythra cheese to garnish
1/4 cup red wine, like Merlot

Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a wide, deep pan or a large pot. When the oil is hot, add the fennel, eggplant, and onion and sweat them slowly until they are very soft, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle some salt over everything while they are cooking. Stir occasionally. Add the garlic and cook for another minute or two. Then add in the wine and let it cook down, reducing by at least half. Stir in the tomato paste and cook this for another few minutes. Kick the heat up to medium high and add the tomatoes and mix well. Taste for salt and add some if needed. Let this simmer gently for 20 minutes. Top with cheese and enjoy! Optional Step: The following is optional, but makes a better sauce for long pasta like spaghetti. Pour the sauce into a blender or food processor and puree. If you are going to serve this sauce with short pasta, like penne or bowties, you can skip this step.

Green Beans with Tomatoes

Veggie Box green beans
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 Veggie Box onion finely chopped
Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
2 cloves garlic, minced
Veggie Box roma tomatoes, crushed
1-2 sprigs of fresh Veggie Box basil, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Wash and trim the ends of the green beans. Set aside. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté for about 4-5 minutes or until the onion is translucent. Make sure to give it a few stirs. Add the red pepper flakes and the minced garlic and sauté for about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, and crush them as they cook. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to obtain a vigorous simmer. (Continued in next column).

Simmer for about 10 minutes or until the sauce begins to thicken. In the meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to boil. Cook the beans for about 5 minutes. Beans should still be crisp. Drain and add to simmering tomatoes. Simmer, uncovered, until beans become tender but still firm (not mushy). If the sauce appears dry, add some water. Add the herbs during the last few minutes of cooking. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Fennel & Potato Gratin

3 tablespoons butter
1 Veggie Box onion, sliced
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 1/4 cups half-and-half
10oz. block sharp white Cheddar cheese, shredded
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 1/2 pounds of potatoes, thinly sliced
Veggie Box fennel bulb, thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 400°. Melt butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté 2-3 minutes or until tender. Add garlic and sauté 1 minute. Whisk in flour; cook, whisking constantly, 1 minute. Gradually whisk in half-and-half; cook, whisking constantly, 3-4 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat. Whisk in cheese until melted. Stir in salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Layer potato and fennel slices alternately in a lightly greased, broiler-safe ceramic 2-qt. casserole dish. Spread cheese sauce over layers. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 400° for 50 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove from oven. Increase oven temperature to broil with oven rack 5 inches from heat. Uncover dish, and broil 2-4 minutes or until golden brown. Garnish, if desired.

