

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 10, August 2

Welcome to week 10 of the Summer Veggie Box!

Today is election day, so be sure to go vote. If you need to find your polling location, head to www.michigan.gov/vote to find it easily! Please remember that with the recent redistricting, your polling location might have changed from what it has been in years past! Polls will be open from 7 a.m to 8 p.m. and the primary's today are to help decide the Michigan GOP nomination for governor, several Congressional seats statewide, and primary races for Michigan Senate and House seats, as well as important local millages and bond proposals. How does voting and politics relate to food or food access? State officials administer many nutrition programs like WIC, SNAP, school lunch and breakfast, and afterschool and summer food programs. They can also provide discretionary funds for food banks and pantries and shape policies that directly effect our food systems in Michigan. Voting is a way to express your opinions and elect leaders who support your interests and values. Get out and vote, and thank you for supporting local food!

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.

ALLEN

Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Organic Fennel, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Organic Eggplant, Cinzori Farms, Ceresco

Corn, Felzke Farms, Dewitt

Organic Onions, Cinzori Farms, Ceresco

Organic Parsley, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Poblano, Ten Hens Farm, Bath

Organic Spring Mix, Monroe Family Organics, Alma

Add-Ons

Bread, Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt

Meat, Heffron Farms Market, Belding

Honey, Beebehavior Ranch, Ovid

Recipes and Tips!

Fennel & Potato Gratin

3 tablespoons butter
1 Veggie Box onion, sliced
2 Veggie Box garlic cloves, minced (from last week)
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 1/4 cups half-and-half
1/2 (10-oz.) 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 (last week you got two pounds, for reference)
Veggie Box fennel bulb, thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 400°. Melt butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add onion ; sauté 2 to 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 to 4 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat. Whisk in cheese until melted and smooth. Stir in salt and next 2 ingredients. 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. 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 to 4 minutes or until golden brown. Garnish, if desired.

Meatless Spaghetti Sauce with Fennel and Eggplant

4 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup Veggie Box fennel, finely chopped
1/2 Veggie Box onion, finely chopped
Veggie Box eggplant, cubed
1 garlic clove, chopped (from last week!)
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

(Cont. on right side)

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.

Elote (Mexican Street Corn)

Veggie Box Sweet Corn
Mexican Crema
Cotija cheese
Chili powder or smoked paprika
Limes
Cilantro

The husks will keep the corn safe from the direct heat on the grill so make sure you leave them on. To prepare the corn, just strip the husks back, remove the silk and then fold the husks back up. The real secret to grilling corn on the cob starts before it ever hits the grill. You need to fill your sink with cold water and 1-2 tablespoons of kosher salt. Drop the silk-free corn in the water and let it soak for a good 10-15 minutes. Soaking the corn will allow the corn to stay moist, plus the husks won't burn off to ash and the corn will be more flavorful thanks to the salt brine. You'll grill the corn first in the husks, then strip them back and turn the grill up, rotating the corn as soon as grill marks appear. Grilled corn on the cob in the husks won't dry out as easily and will make for juicier corn. As soon as you pull the corn off the grill, spread the Mexican crema all over each corn on the cob. If you can't find Mexican crema, you can use mayonnaise as a substitute. Sprinkle the cotija all over the corn that has been lathered in crema (can use feta in place of the cotija). The classic seasoning for elote is chili powder, but can also use smoked paprika. So maybe do a few cobs with each and see which one you prefer. You can sprinkle them on the corn with the cotija cheese and then squeeze fresh lime juice all over each corn on the cob. Top off each cob with some chopped fresh cilantro.