

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 12, August 16

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

Stone Circle Bakehouse

Stone Circle Bakehouse of Holt, Michigan, specializes in the European tradition of artisanal bread that is cut, scaled, and shaped by hand. Owner Kevin Cosgrove allows his dough to slowly ferment before baking it on the deck of his wood-fired oven. At Stone Circle Bakehouse, the innovative deliciousness stems from Cosgrove's desire to preserve traditional baking methods, rather than change them. Organic, local ingredients are prioritized when possible to bring customers fresh, environmentally and community friendly baked goods.

Crop Profile

Eggplant

The eggplants we grow in our vegetable gardens took hundreds of years to reach us. Food historians have traced their origin to either India or China with some records showing cultivation as early as 50 BCE. Travelers carried the fruit west to Europe, leading to its eventual arrival in America thanks to Thomas Jefferson who brought seeds back from France. While we enjoy eggplants of different shapes, colors and sizes, these early plants bore fruit that was considered ornamental instead of edible. They instead produced fruits that were small, white, and oval that looked just like chicken eggs. Eggplant is grown for its spongy and absorbent fruit that is used widely in cooking. Most people consider it a vegetable despite its classification as a berry fruit, part of the genus *Solanum* which includes tomatoes and potatoes. Like the tomato its skin and seeds can be eaten, but like the potato it should not be eaten raw. Raw eggplant has a bitter and astringent taste, but it becomes tender when cooked and develops a rich, complex flavor.

ALLEN

Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Organic Basil, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt*
Slicing Tomatoes, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*
Organic Red Onions, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*
Organic Eggplant, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*
Corn, *Felzke Farms, Dewitt*
Organic Radishes, *Green Wagon Farm, Ada*
Salad, *Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing*
Organic Beets, *Green Wagon Farm, Ada*
Peppers, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt and Peckham Farms, Lansing*

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt*
Meat, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Recipes and Tips!

Beet Salad

Veggie Box Beets
Veggie Box Salad Mix
1/3 cup pecans
1/3 cup dried cranberries
1/3 cup feta cheese

Balsamic Vinaigrette:
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon dijon mustard
1 Veggie Box garlic clove (from last week), minced
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with foil. Wrap each beet in a sheet of foil. Bake in oven for about an hour. Remove from oven, allow to cool, then peel skin and slice into halves then wedges. Toast the pecans in a dry skillet until golden. Add salad to a large bowl, along with beets, cheese, pecans, and cranberries. Combine all dressing ingredients into a mason jar and shake well to combine and add to the salad to taste. If not serving salad right away, shake the dressing again just before drizzling over the salad

Spicy Roasted Eggplant, Tomato, & Ricotta Frittata

2 tbsp olive oil
1/2 or 1 Veggie Box eggplant diced
1 Veggie Box tomato, chopped
Salt and black pepper, to taste
5 large eggs
1 cup milk
1 tsp red pepper flakes
1 lb ricotta

Heat oven to 450F. In a large bowl, toss together the olive oil, eggplant cubes, and tomatoes. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Spread on a parchment-lined baking sheet and roast for 20-30 minutes, or until eggplant is tender and tomatoes are bursting. Lower oven to 375F. In a second bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, and red pepper flakes. Grease a 9-inch pie or tart pan. Stir together the egg mixture with the vegetable mixture. Pour into the prepared pan. Top with the ricotta. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until set. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving.

Eggplant Parmesan

1-2 Veggie Box eggplant
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 teaspoon sea salt, divided
1 Veggie Box onion, minced
2 Veggie Box garlic cloves (from last week!), minced
Veggie Box tomatoes, crushed
1 teaspoon honey
1.5 ounces (about 3/4 cup) grated parmesan cheese
6 ounces grated mozzarella cheese (about 1.5 cups)
Veggie Box basil, minced for garnish

Preheat oven to 420F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut the tops off the eggplants then cut them into 1/2" thick slices. Lay them on the baking sheet, drizzle with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Roast in the oven for 25 minutes. While the eggplants are cooking, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a medium-sized pot. Add the onion and cook until it is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, honey, and tomatoes and cook for 15-20 minutes, or until the sauce has thickened. Reduce the heat, cover the pot, and simmer until the eggplants are cooked. Spread 1/2 cup of the sauce in a 9"x9" pan. Add a layer of eggplant, top with 1/2 cup of sauce and 1/3 of both of the cheeses. Repeat until you run out of eggplant so that you have several layers. Put the pan into the oven and bake until the eggplant parmesan is bubbly and the cheese starts to brown, about 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and let it rest for at least 15 minutes (or up to 30 minutes) before cutting into it. Garnish with the minced basil and serve.

Radish Toast

Veggie Box Radishes, thinly sliced
Salted butter
Baguette or other bread
Sea salt

Slice and toast baguette, and spread butter. Place sliced radishes on top, along with a pinch of sea salt. You can also sautee the sliced radishes in butter on a pan until slightly softened and eat over toasted baguette slices.

