

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 1, September 13

We're on native land. Specifically, Allen Neighborhood Center is on land belonging to the Anishinaabe (Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi people) & Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which today is called Lansing, Michigan. Lansing was originally called "Nkwejong," meaning "where the rivers meet," and Michigan comes from the Ojibwe word "mishigamaa," meaning "large lake." The purpose of this statement is to show respect for Indigenous peoples, and recognize their enduring relationship to the land. Practicing acknowledgment can also raise awareness about histories that are often suppressed or forgotten. Given how closely Veggie Box is tied to the land and the environment, we think it's important to acknowledge the history of the relationships that Indigenous folks had (and continue to have) with the land, plants and animals, and how these relationships sustained communities for generations. Over the next fourteen weeks, we ask that you continue to remind yourself of Indigenous presence and land rights in our community. What might our local food system look like if it were to have a deeper respect and understanding of Indigenous cultures? In what ways has colonialism disrupted Indigenous foodways? How can this be combated? As a community, we are growing and harvesting foods that would not otherwise be tangible without the land that it is grown on. Because of the history of foraging and using land for harvesting, we must learn about and acknowledge where these lessons began and how Indigenous food systems overlap into food systems at large. Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

MSU Student Organic Farm

The MSU Student Organic Farm is a 15 acre year-round educational, organic farm located in Holt, MI about 3 miles south of the Michigan State University campus. Started in 1999 by students who desired a more hands-on learning experience, the farm now offers a nearly year-long intensive program for those interested in learning everything they can about organic farming. Not only do the students tend to the fields, but the program also involves caring for the farm's livestock. MSU's multiple cafeterias source as much produce as they can from the MSUSOF and they also offer a weekly farm stand in the middle of campus for students and public alike.

Crop Profile

Watermelon

Watermelon was originally domesticated in Northeast Africa, and was grown as both a water and food source 4000 years ago. It is a highly cultivated fruit worldwide, having more than 1,000 varieties, and is 92% water.

The watermelon is part of the cucurbitaceae family, which also includes cucumbers, gourds, squashes, and pumpkins. European colonists as well as slave trade from Africa are thought to have introduced watermelon to the US; it was found growing in Florida as early as 1576 and in Massachusetts by 1629. You can either store your watermelon on the counter if you plan on eating it soon, or in the fridge if you'd like to store it for a week or maybe two.



What's in the Box?

Sweet Carmen Pepper, *Ten Hens Farm*, Bath
Organic Watermelon, *MSU Student Organic Farm*, Holt

Organic Collard Greens, *Cinzori Farms*, Ceresco
Cherry Tomatoes, *Peckham Farms*, Lansing
Acorn Squash, *Tomac Pumpkin Patch*, Chesaning
Organic Eggplant, *Cinzori Farms*, Ceresco
Zestar Apples, *Hillcrest Farms*, Eaton Rapids

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

Coffee, *The 517 Coffee Company*, Lansing

Tea, *ANC's Youth Service Corps*, Lansing

Organic Navy Beans, *Ferris Organic Farm*, Eaton Rapids

Meat, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding

Pork, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte

Beef, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding

Chicken, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding

Recipes and Tips!



Watermelon Tajin Wedges

Veggie Box Watermelon, sliced into wedges (you can also cut into cubes and place on skewers if preferred)

Lime juice to taste

Tajin seasoning to taste

Optional: cotija cheese and cilantro for garnish

Season the watermelon wedges or skewers with fresh lime juice and tajin. Add cotija cheese and chopped cilantro if desired. Enjoy!

Italian Eggplant Sandwich

Veggie Box eggplant

Extra virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

Black pepper

A few Veggie Box cherry tomatoes

fresh mozzarella cheese

basil pesto

olive spread or tapenade (optional)

Bread

Basil leaves, for the garnish (optional)

Cut the eggplant into 1/3-inch thick rounds. Lay out slices and liberally sprinkle each side with the salt and let the eggplant sit for 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 400 F degrees. Rinse the eggplant under cool water and thoroughly pat dry with a towel.

Arrange the eggplant in a single layer on a baking sheet. Brush both sides lightly with olive oil and a light sprinkle of black pepper. Roast the eggplant in the oven for 10 minutes. Flip and roast for an additional 10 minutes. Toast the bread in the oven for a few minutes. Thinly slice the tomatoes. Tear the mozzarella into pieces. Spread pesto on the cut side of one piece of bread, and olive spread on the cut side of the other bread. Place grilled eggplant on the bread, and top with mozzarella, sliced tomatoes, and basil, if using. Top with the other bread slice. If desired, wrap in aluminum foil to help contain the mess when eating!

The Hell Do I Do With My Acorn Squash?

Should acorn squash be peeled? Nope! Acorn squash does not need to be peeled before roasting and you can actually eat the peel once cooked.

What's the easiest way to cut it? Acorn squash can be difficult to cut so make sure you're using a sharp chef's knife. Cut straight through the squash starting on one side of the stem (not through the stem) until you've cut through to the middle. Continue cutting around the side through the tip then around the other side of the stem. Grab both sides of the squash and pull it apart- it should split to one side of the stem. The seeds should be scooped out before cooking, but you should definitely save them to roast later!

How do I cook it?

Roasting: preheat oven to 375F with a rack in the bottom third. Place acorn squash halves on a baking sheet cut-side up, and drizzle with olive oil or butter. Season with salt and pepper and roast for 45-60 minutes, until flesh is easily pierced with a fork. You can also stuff your squash halves with other vegetables, beans, meat, cheese etc. before roasting or puree the roasted halves to make soup.

Microwave: The exact time will depend on the weight and power of your microwave. Place squash halves cut-side down in a microwave safe dish with 2tbsp of water. Cook on high for 6 minutes. Carefully flip halves and place 1/2 tbsp of butter in each half then season as desired.

Recipe: Stuffed Acorn Squash with Garlicky Beans & Collard Greens

1 bunch Veggie Box Collard Greens, stems removed and sliced into ribbons

1 can white beans, drained and rinsed

2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 tbsp olive oil

1-2 tbsp lemon juice to taste

Salt and pepper to taste

Optional: parmesan for serving

Preheat oven to 375F. Place the squash cut side up in a baking dish. Drizzle with olive oil and use your hands to lightly coat the squash. Bake for 45-60 minutes, or until squash is tender when pierced with a fork. While squash is cooking, heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add shallots (or onion) and garlic and cook until shallots are translucent. Stir in the beans then stir in the collard green. Cook, stirring often, until greens are tender, about 5 minutes. Add lemon juice, salt, and pepper to taste. Stuff each squash half with the bean and greens mixture and top with parmesan if desired.