

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 2, September 22

When choosing which food to buy, one of the most common factors to consider is the cost. That being said, the price of local food products are often more expensive than buying at a chain grocery store like Kroger or Meijer. Why is this? Industrial-scale farms that manufacture crops like corn and soy receive government subsidies to mass produce animal feed which leads to overproduction of these crops. This creates a surplus of corn and soy, which industrial food manufacturers use to produce cheap ingredients—like high fructose corn syrup and soybean oil—for highly processed foods. Mass producers of fruits and vegetables are also able to reduce costs by incorporating large-scale infrastructure and machinery while also hiring farmworkers at incredibly low wages. This desire to reduce cost often results in poor working conditions and environmentally harmful farming practices. These factors coupled with an understanding that industrial farms already have millions of dollars in profit in supermarket contract sales (regardless of the sale price), it begins to make sense how production costs of local food are often higher. Considering everything it takes to get something like a mass-produced tomato to its spot on the supermarket shelf including the seeds, labor, packaging, and transportation, what is really more startling? That supporting farmers and community members with fair wages and using sustainable farming practices costs more? Or that mass-produced food associated with low-wages, poor working conditions, and huge profit margins costs less? Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Grazing Fields Cooperative

Grazing Fields is a Michigan, multi-farm cooperative and wholesaler of natural free-range brown eggs. They have been delivering great products to mid and southeast Michigan grocery stores and restaurants every week since 1997. Grazing Fields supports small and medium size farms throughout the region. When you purchase Grazing Fields eggs you purchase the assurance that your Michigan natural brown eggs are delivered fresh to your door each week by cage-free chickens and people who care.

Crop Profile

Serrano Peppers

Serrano peppers are a type of hot chili pepper named for their origin in the mountains (sierras) of Mexico, specifically the states of Puebla and Hidalgo. The Scoville Heat Unit (SHU) scale is used to measure the heat and pungency of chili peppers and can range from bell peppers at 0 SHU to peppers like the Carolina Reaper at around 1.5 million SHU! Serranos are very flavorful with a similar taste to jalapenos but have more of a kick ranging from 10,000 to 23,000 SHU. Serranos range in color from green to red depending on how ripe they are with the green peppers being slightly milder. They are often eaten raw such as in pico de gallo or guacamole but can also be cooked or roasted to use in dishes like stir fry and salsa. Be careful when chopping serranos as the oils released can irritate skin especially on your face. This can be avoided by wearing gloves. They can be stored in the fridge dry and unwashed for up to two weeks or frozen for up to three months. To freeze, slice and place on a baking sheet with parchment paper (so they don't stick together) then place in a sealed bag once frozen.



What's in the Box?

Organic Serrano Peppers, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*
Onions, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Organic Green Beans, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Garlic, *Green Eagle Farm, Onondaga*

Organic Huckleberry Potatoes, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Organic Parsley, *Monroe Family Organics, Alma*

Sweet Corn, *Felzke Farms, Dewitt*

Organic Cabbage, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt*

Meat, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Recipes and Tips!

Corn and Serrano Souffle

Veggie Box Corn cut off the cob, about 1 1/2 cups
1/2 Veggie Box Onion, diced
2 eggs, beaten
1/3 cup plain Greek yogurt
1-2 Veggie Box serrano peppers, minced
1 tbsp oil, safflower
1 tsp sea salt
1 tsp coarse ground pepper
Veggie Box Parsley chopped for garnish
Optional for serving: sour cream, lime juice, and/or salsa

Combine the corn kernels, diced onion, beaten eggs, yogurt, minced serrano, oil, salt, and pepper in a medium mixing bowl and blend together. Pour into an oiled baking dish and cook in the oven at 400 F for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick comes clean from the center. Remove and garnish with Veggie Box parsley. Optional: serve with sour cream and lime juice!

Tabouli

1/2 cup fine bulgur wheat
4 firm Roma tomatoes, very finely chopped
1 English cucumber (hothouse cucumber), very finely chopped
Most of your Veggie Box parsley, part of the stems removed, washed and well-dried, very finely chopped
12-15 fresh mint leaves, stems removed, washed, well-dried, very finely chopped
4 green onions, white and green parts, very finely chopped
Salt
3-4 tablespoon lemon juice
3-4 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

Wash the bulgur wheat and soak it in water for 5-7 minute. Drain very well (squeeze the bulgur wheat by hand to get rid of any excess water). Set aside. Very finely chop the vegetables, herbs and green onions as indicated above. Be sure to place the tomatoes in a colander to drain excess juice. Place the chopped vegetables, herbs and green onions in a mixing bowl or dish. Add the bulgur and season with salt. Mix gently. Add the the lemon juice and olive oil and mix again. For best results, cover the tabouli and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Spice Up Your Life!

What can I do with hot peppers?

If you love spicy food, mincing hot peppers and stir frying them with garlic is a great base for many recipes. To get a more complex flavor you can roast peppers in the oven or over an open flame to be used in a variety of sauces from simple hot sauce to salsa or even marinara. If you don't see yourself adding hot peppers directly to a recipe, making hot sauce, chili oil (see below), or chili crisp are all great options.

Serrano Chili Oil

Veggie Box Serrano Peppers, destemmed and thinly sliced (remove the seeds for a less spicy oil)
1 cup olive oil or canola oil
Optional: 1-2 Veggie Box garlic cloves, sliced
Heat 1/2 cup olive oil in a pan over medium heat and add the serrano pepper and garlic clove slices. Simmer for five minutes stirring frequently. Add the remaining oil, reduce to low heat, and stir for another five minutes. Turn off heat and let oil cool for about an hour. Pour into a bottle or jar and enjoy! Can be refrigerated for up to two weeks.



What if it's too spicy?

If you are more sensitive to spicy food you can remove the seeds and the flesh it's connected to to reduce the heat. You can do this by slicing the pepper in half and using a spoon or the back of your knife to scrape the seeds out and discard. Adding dairy, carbs, or sugar can also help with spice. Crema, sour cream, and cotija cheese can be added to Mexican-style recipes for example, while recipes like stir fries can be enjoyed with a big bowl of white rice.

Spicy Peanut Butter Sauce

1-2 Veggie Box Serrano Peppers, minced
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp peanut butter (creamy preferred)
1 tbsp soy sauce
Sugar to taste

Cook peppers and garlic in oil over medium heat until fragrant. Add the peanut butter and soy sauce and stir (add water if needed for desired consistency). Add sugar to taste. Tip: Use this sauce with Veggie Box Green beans for a delicious stir fry! Serve with rice.