

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 2, September 20

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

Fennel

Fennel is a flowering plant in the carrot family that is native to the Mediterranean region and has two main types: herb fennel and Florence fennel. 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 slaw. When 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 is also 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.



What's in the Box?

Organic Serrano Peppers, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*
Fennel, *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 cup sweet 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!

Pasta with Fennel Pesto

1/2 Pound of Pasta
Veggie Box fennel bulb (leaves set aside)
Optional: 1 sweet pepper (from last week's box!)
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tsp olive oil

For the pesto:
Veggie Box Fennel leaves
2 cloves of garlic
Optional: 1/4 cup nutritional yeast (adds a nice cheesy flavor!)
1/4 cup toasted pumpkin/sunflower seeds, or walnuts
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp ground black pepper
Salt to taste

Dice the fennel (and peppers if using) for roasting into 1-inch chunks and place in a bowl. Add balsamic vinegar, olive oil, salt, and black pepper to taste, and toss. Add to a baking sheet and roast at 400F in the oven, stirring a couple of times during cooking, until they are fork-tender and coated with a balsamic glaze, about 35 minutes. Place all of the pesto ingredients in a food processor (except the olive oil) and process until coarsely powdered. With the motor running, pour in the olive oil until you have an even paste. Place the pasta, roasted veggies and the pesto in a bowl. Add: chopped, toasted walnuts, parmesan, or halved cherry tomatoes. Mix well and serve immediately.

Spice Up Your Life!

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! This week's Veggie Box includes serrano peppers which have a very similar flavor to jalapeños but have more of a kick ranging from 10,000 to 23,000 SHU.

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 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.