

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 5, October 11



Welcome to the fifth week of the Fall Veggie Box! Did you know that October is Michigan's Apple Month? Apples are synonymous with Fall here in the Midwest, particularly in Michigan where over 14.9 million apple trees are in commercial production, covering 34,500 acres on 775 family-run farms! Apples are the largest and most valuable fruit crop in Michigan, which is also known as the variety state due to apple farmers growing more than 16 varieties of apples in a diverse array of flavors. It is estimated that Michigan apple growers will harvest an estimated 1.239 billion pounds of apples in 2022, making Michigan the third-largest apple producing state in the nation. Apples were brought to North America by colonists in the 17th century and the first apple orchard on the continent was planted by Reverend William Blaxton in 1625. Apple varieties were brought as seeds from Europe and spread along Native American trade routes in addition to being cultivated on colonists' farms. You can celebrate Apple month in a number of ways (if you haven't already) such as by going to a U-pick farm (Michigan has over 200!), visiting one of Michigan's many cider mills, or enjoying apple treats like apple butter and apple pie. This week you can celebrate Apple Month with the Shizuka Apples in your Veggie Box. This variety is great for eating as is or making into juice or applesauce. Thank you for supporting local food!

Producer Spotlight

Hillcrest Farms

Hillcrest Farms is a four season farm in Eaton Rapids that offers an extensive selection of fresh produce. Owner, Mark Kastner, started farming in 2008 gaining inspiration from his grandmother, a fantastic chef and farmer with whom he spent summers with as a child. Now he is known around town for his deliciously unique spinach and salad mix, as well as for the impeccable quality of the rest of his produce. His sustainable farming practices assure customers that products are safely produced with regards to environment and human health.

Crop Profile

Komatsuna

Komatsuna is a flavorful leafy vegetable, also known as Japanese Mustard Spinach. It is very similar to Bok Choy and can be used in many similar dishes- toss it in curry, soups, or stir fry for a spicy addition full of nutrition. It's great in cooked dishes because the fully matured leaves stand up very well to high heat and cooking temperatures. Komatsuna is grown commercially almost exclusively in eastern Asian countries, namely Japan and Korea. This vegetable gets its name from the first region it was known to be grown in- the Komatsugawa District in Japan.

What's in the Box?

Organic Collard Greens, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*
Shizuka Apples, *Hillcrest Farms, Eaton Rapids*
Komatsuna, *Hunter Park GardenHouse, Lansing*
Slicer Tomatoes, *Peckham Farms, Lansing*
Organic Hot Pepper Mix, *Owosso Organics, Owosso*

Organic Pie Pumpkins, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*
Organic Carrots, *MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt*

Add-Ons

Eggs, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*
Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse, Holt*
Tea, *ANC's Youth Service Corps, Lansing*
Chevre, *Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga*
Cheese, *Hickory Knoll Farms Creamery, Onondaga*
Coffee, *The 517 Coffee Company, Lansing*
Meat, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*
Pork, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*
Beef, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*
Chicken, *Heffron Farms Market, Belding*
Kombucha, *Apple Blossom Kombucha, Lansing*
Organic Black Turtle Beans, *Ferris Organic Farm, Eaton Rapids*

Recipes and Tips!

Stuffed Pumpkin

1 Veggie Box Pumpkin
Salt & freshly ground pepper
1/4 cup of cubed, stale bread
1/4 cup of cooked wild rice
1/4 cup of grated cheese (of your choice)
2 Veggie Box garlic cloves (from last week),
1/3 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup of Veggie Box diced onions (from last week)
1/2 of Veggie Box collard greens
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
1 teaspoon of fresh thyme

Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with a silicone baking mat or parchment, or find a Dutch oven with a diameter that's just a tiny bit larger than your pumpkin. Using a very sturdy knife cut a cap out of the top of the pumpkin. Clear away the seeds and strings from the cap and from inside the pumpkin. Season the inside of the pumpkin generously with salt and pepper, and put it on the baking sheet or in the pot. Toss the bread, cheese, wild rice, garlic, onions, collards, and thyme together in a bowl. Season with pepper and pack the mix into the pumpkin. Stir the cream with the nutmeg and some salt and pepper and pour it into the pumpkin. Put the cap in place and bake the pumpkin for about 1 1/2 hours. Check after 60 minutes, or until everything inside the pumpkin is bubbling and the flesh of the pumpkin is tender enough to be pierced easily with the tip of a knife. Because the pumpkin will have exuded liquid, remove the cap during the last 20 minutes or so, so that the liquid can bake away and the top of the stuffing can brown a little. There is some variation in sizes of the pumpkins, so you will have to check to see how done it is as it cooks!



Hiro's Komatsuna Nibitashi

One of our former volunteers, Hiro, uses komatsuna often in Japan. A note from Hiro: "My mom would make this dish all the time when I was growing up in Japan. It is one of those dishes that touches your soul for me!"

Veggie Box Komatsuna
1 package of Aburaage
1/2 cup Dashi (or Vegetable stock)
1 tsp sugar
1 1/2 Tbsp Soy Sauce
2 Tbsp Sake
2 Tbsp Mirin

Wash Komatsuna well and cut into 1 1/2" long pieces. Cut Aburaage into 1/2" width strips. In a pot, heat Dashi, sugar, Soy Sauce, Mirin, and Sake. Add komatsuna and Aburaage and cook for a couple of minutes, until softened. Cover and let it cool completely. Serve at room temperature or heat up. If you cannot find aburaage, it is made by cutting tofu into thin slices and deep fried two times, once at lower temperature first and then at high temperature last.

Faith's Favorite Tofu Recipe

1 pound silken tofu (don't use firm!)
3 Veggie Box garlic cloves (from last week), minced
1-2 Veggie Box Hot Peppers, minced (remove seeds if desired)
1-2 scallions, sliced thinly, white and green parts separated
2 tbsp light soy sauce
1 1/2 tsp sugar
2 tbsp neutral oil
1/2 tsp sesame oil

Remove silken tofu from packaging (carefully!). Place on a plate and let rest for at least 10 minutes, dump out any remaining water. Steam the tofu for 10 minutes (you can also microwave it for 3-5 minutes or eat it cold!) Mince garlic and hot peppers. Heat oil in a pan on medium high heat then add the oil. Add the garlic, hot peppers, and white parts of the scallions and cook for around 30 seconds- it should be sizzling! Add soy sauce, sugar, and sesame oil, cook for another 30 seconds. Turn off heat and add green parts of scallions. Carefully pour liquid at bottom of tofu plate out then pour sauce mixture over tofu. Serve with rice and Komatsuna Nibitashi if desired!