

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 3, March 14

The origins of the CSA, like so many agricultural practices in the United States, can be traced back to a Black farmer. Dr. Booker T. Whatley was born in Alabama in 1915 and growing up saw how small farms, particularly those owned by black folks, were disappearing due to expansion of mass agriculture. He grew up and earned a degree in agricultural studies at Alabama A&M University, then served in the Korean War where he built and operated a hydroponic farm to supply the troops with fresh produce. After his service he went on to earn a PhD in Horticulture from Rutgers University and later a law degree from Alabama A&M. Dr. Whatley is best known for his work to help farmers “grow smaller and smarter” and to focus on “internal resources” such as “the sun, air, rain, plants, animals, people, and all the other physical resources that are within the immediate environment of every farm” through a number of different methods. He first advocated for farmers to grow high-value crops like berries or heirloom strains instead of commodity crops that would compete with commercial agriculture. He created his regenerative farming systems, a holistic approach to farming in a way that doesn’t damage the land and incorporates practices such as crop rotation, topsoil regeneration, and groundwater conservation. In addition to regenerative farming, he pioneered the practice of Pick-Your-Own (also called U-Pick), something that you have probably done with your family at some point! He also created a “clientele membership clubs”, the original version of the CSA, in order to allow farmers to “plan production, anticipate demand & have a guaranteed market.” He recognized that a program like CSAs could benefit both the farmer and the consumer by connecting the two directly. Though often left out of history books, we have BIPOC farmers, horticulturalists, and scientists to thank for so many sustainable and community-based agriculture practices in use today.

Farmer Profile

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

Apples

Apples originated in Central Asia and are part of the Rosaceae or rose family that also includes pears, strawberries, hawthorn, loquat, quince, and peaches. There are more than 7,500 known cultivars worldwide some of which have very long histories. Older cultivars, though often considered more flavorful, are generally not available commercially due to lower production rates, shipping difficulty due to not having a uniform size, susceptibility to disease, and being more difficult to grow. One of the benefits of eating locally is being able to access foods that are more difficult to produce commercially for the previous reasons—if you have subscribed to Veggie Box in the past or shopped for apples at farmers markets, you may have noticed that local apples often include varieties that you can’t find in the grocery store. Even when buying commercially available varieties like this week’s Fuji apples, I’m sure you’ll agree that you can taste the local difference! For optimal storage, keep apples in your fridge's crisper drawer or in a cool location.

ALLEN
HORTICULTURAL CENTER

Veggie Box

What's in the Box?

Fuji Apples, *Hillcrest Farms*, Eaton Rapids
Organic Sweet Potatoes, *Green Wagon Farm*, Ada
Organic Spinach, *Green Wagon Farm*, Ada
Organic Kale, *Green Wagon Farm*, Ada
Red Radishes, *Green Wagon Farm*, Ada
Ginger, *Peckham Farms*, Lansing
Organic Red Onions, *Cinzori Farms*, Ceresco

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle BakeHouse*, Holt
Meat, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte
Chicken, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding
Beef, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding
Pork, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte
Eggs, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte
Cheese, *Hickory Knoll Farms Cooperative*, Onondaga
Chevre, *Hickory Knoll Farms Cooperative*, Onondaga
Coffee, *517 Coffee Company*, Lansing

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Recipes and Tips!

Veggie Box Kale Salad

1/4 cup olive oil
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
1 Tbsp real maple syrup
1 tsp dijon mustard
Salt and pepper to taste
1 Veggie Box kale
1 Veggie Box Fuji apple, thinly sliced
1/2 -1 Veggie Box carrot from last week, shredded
~1/2 cup
1/2 Veggie Box red onion, thinly sliced
In bowl mix olive oil, lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, Dijon mustard, and salt and pepper to taste. Remove washed kale leaves from stems. When dry bunch the kale leaves and thinly slice into ribbons. Transfer kale to a large mixing bowl with apples, carrots, and red onion (and nuts and cheese if adding). Whisk dressing again then pour over salad. Toss well to evenly coat and serve.

Sweet Potato and Black Bean Enchiladas

Veggie Box Sweet Potatoes, cubed in small chunks
1-2 Veggie Box Kale leaves
1 jalapeño, minced
1/2 Veggie Box red onion, diced small
2 tsp olive oil
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp chili powder
Salt and pepper to taste
1 can (15 oz) black beans drained & rinsed
¼ cup chopped Box Cilantro
juice of 1 lime
Optional: 1 cup corn
2 cups shredded cheese
10 tortillas
1 can (16 oz) enchilada sauce (or make your own!)

Heat oven to 425F. In a bowl or on a baking sheet stir together the cubed sweet potatoes, diced jalapeno, minced onion, olive oil, cumin, chili powder, salt, and pepper. Cook for 18-20 minutes until soft, stirring halfway through. Add roasted mixture into a large mixing bowl and add the black beans, lime juice, and half of the chopped cilantro. Stir to combine. Pour 1/3 cup of the enchilada sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 baking pan. Assemble the enchiladas adding sweet potato filling and shredded cheese, rolling them up tightly. Place seam side down in the pan and repeat with remaining tortillas. Pour the

remainder of the enchilada sauce over the tortillas, top with remaining cheese. Cook uncovered for 20-25 minutes. Garnish with cilantro and serve with preferred toppings like sour cream.

Pickled Red Onions

1 Veggie Box red onion, thinly sliced
1 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
1/2 cup water
3 Tbsp granulated sugar
1 Tbsp kosher salt
Optional: Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes

Place thinly sliced onion in a large sanitized jar with a tight-fitting lid. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, bring vinegar, water, sugar, and salt to a boil. Stir until sugar and salt dissolve. Add in red pepper flakes, if using, then pour mixture over onions. Let cool to room temperature, then place lid on and refrigerate until ready to use, at least 2 hours. Onions will keep in refrigerator for up to 1 month.

Ginger Hot Chocolate

2 cups milk
1 cup water
Sweetener to taste
1/4-1/2 teaspoon of fresh Veggie Box grated ginger
1/4 cup cocoa or cocoa powder
1 pinch sea salt
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Instructions

Heat milk and water in medium saucepan. Once it comes to a simmer, reduce heat slightly and whisk in cocoa powder, sea salt, and ginger. Once cocoa is hot enough for liking, 2-5 minutes, remove from heat and add vanilla extract. Stir once more.

How to Ginger

Unlike store-bought ginger, this ginger has not cured and does not have a tough, fibrous skin that needs to be peeled. Put your ginger in a freezer bag and put it in the freezer (you can also use vacuum sealed bags). When you need to use it, pull it out and use a zester to shred the ginger into my food/drink! When done, put it back in the freezer and it can stay there for a year. It makes processing ginger so easy (the frozen ginger can shred so much easier), and it lasts for a long time!