



Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 7, July 10

Welcome to week 7 of Summer Veggie Box! Holistic, resilient, self-sustaining communities are rooted in ideals of shared-responsibility and mutual aid. Often, we think of ‘giving back’ as a way to address the cracks in our existing systems that do not provide adequate support to marginalized communities. While these call-to-actions are helpful and emphasize good-will, if a mindset as to what ‘giving’ entails is limited to dire situations when folks are experiencing an extreme moment of vulnerability and need, we are also emphasizing power imbalances and systems of oppression. What does this mean? Giving back to your community and supporting those around you should be a staple in your day-to-day life. Fostering feelings of solidarity and kinship, a feeling of neighborhood and place, should exist before and after extreme moments of need. This also means *you* should be willing to ask for and receive help! Giving back and investing in your community builds trust, and the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. A resilient community is

one that is well connected socially, widely aware of community vulnerabilities, and has accessible programs to promote human wellbeing. Volunteering can play a big role in helping to foster this community resilience because it can provide a direct route for individuals to become more socially connected and informed in their area. But ‘giving’ can also include donating money, giving socially by participating in community events and getting to know your neighbors, sharing resources and knowledge, and asking for help when you need it -- giving others the opportunity to care for you. A resilient community strengthens the social and physical well-being of the community and its individuals on a daily basis to reduce the negative impacts of both routine and extreme challenges. What are other ways to give back?

Producer Spotlight *Peckham Farms*

Peckham Inc. is a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation organization which provides job training opportunities for persons with significant disabilities and other barriers to employment. The agricultural arm of the organization is Peckham Farms, which is around 15 acres of field production and uses sustainable practices to grow a diverse selection of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. Peckham employees gain new skills and experiences in all aspects of growing and producing food. This includes planting, maintenance, and harvesting of crops, set up of greenhouse systems, tool and machine operation and maintenance, and customer service. They also provide employees with their own “garden plot,” so they can put new skills to use and grow food for themselves and their families, free of charge.

Crop Profile *Fennel*

Fennel is a flowering plant in the carrot family that is native to the Mediterranean region. There are two main types of fennel: herb fennel and Florence fennel, or the Italian finocchio. The stems, seeds, and feathery leaves are all harvested and used as an herb and seasoning. Florence fennel, however, is grown primarily for its large, bulb-like bottom that is eaten as a vegetable. Typically, the trimmed off green tops 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 slaws. If it's cooked, the bulb's flavor becomes softer, sweeter 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 has also been traditionally considered a carminative (a plant 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?

Cherry Tomatoes, *Peckham Farms*, Lansing
Blueberries, *Felzke Farms*, DeWitt
Curly Kale, *Titus Farms*, Leslie
Organic Basil, *Monroe Family Organics*, Alma
Pea Shoots, *Lake Divide Farms*, Stockbridge
Organic Fennel, *Cinzori Farms*, Ceresco
Garlic, *Magnolia Avenue Farms*, Lansing

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle Bakehouse*, Holt
Meat Variety, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding
Beef, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding
Chicken, *Heffron Farms Market*, Belding
Pork, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte
Eggs, *Grazing Fields Cooperative*, Charlotte

Recipes and Tips!

Curried Lentil Kale Stew

3 Tbsp olive oil
Veggie Box green onions, bulbs chopped (from last week)
1 cup diced Veggie Box carrots (from last week)
4 Veggie Box garlic cloves, chopped
2-inch piece of ginger, peeled and grated
¼ tsp red pepper flakes
1 Tbsp + 2 tsp curry powder
2 tsp salt
1 cup dried green lentils
Veggie Box cherry tomatoes, halved
2 cups broth or water
1 can full-fat coconut milk
½ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
Veggie Box kale, chopped

Heat a pot to medium-high heat and add the oil. Once hot add the onions and carrots and sauté for 3-5 minutes or until onions are translucent. Add the garlic, ginger, red pepper flakes, curry and salt. Cook until fragrant - about 1 minute. Add the lentils and stir. Then pour in the tomatoes and use a spoon to break up the tomatoes until they are slightly saucy. Add the broth and coconut milk and stir to combine. Place a lid on the pot and let it simmer for about 20 minutes. Take the lid off and add the chopped kale and cilantro. Let simmer for an additional 10-15 minutes with the lid off to thicken. Taste and adjust salt if necessary before serving. Top each bowl of stew with rice, lime, cilantro and coconut milk.

Sweet Fennel Butter

1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
3 tablespoons chopped fresh fennel fronds
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
2 teaspoons freshly grated orange zest
1 teaspoon honey
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix together butter, fennel, orange juice, zest and honey until smooth, either in a food processor, in an electric mixer, or by hand. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Scrape butter into a decorative small bowl and serve.

Fennel and Cherry Tomato Pasta Sauce

Veggie Box cherry tomatoes, cut in half
Veggie Box fennel bulb, leaves and bottom removed, thinly sliced
2 tbsp Veggie Box fennel leaves, roughly chopped
1/3 cup white wine
Oil
3 cloves of Veggie Box garlic, thinly sliced
4 Tbsp of Veggie Box basil, minced
Salt, pepper, and red chili flakes to taste

Sauté fennel in oil. When slightly soft, add 1/3 cup white wine and reduce until completely softened. In a separate pan, over medium heat, sauté garlic. Add tomatoes, 2 tbsp fennel leaves, red chili flakes, and stir. As tomatoes break down, add more wine to reduce for about 10 minutes. Add sautéed fennel to tomato mixture and allow to cook down. Serve over your favorite kind of pasta with your choice of cheese. Garnish with sprinkle of fennel fronds.

Blueberry Basil Popsicles

Veggie Box blueberries
2 stalks of Veggie Box basil
Sugar or honey to taste (about 1/8 cup)
1/3 cup water
juice of 1/2 a lemon

In a small saucepan, simmer the blueberries, 1 basil stalks, and water over low heat until blueberries have softened, around 10 minutes. Remove basil stalk, add in sugar, and stir until dissolved. Let mixture cool for 10-15 minutes. Once cooled, blend with the juice of half a lemon and the leaves from the other basil stalk. Blend until smooth and pour into popsicle molds. Enjoy once frozen!

