

Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 11, August 8

Plants provide food, medicine, shelter, dyes, fibers, oils, resins, gums, soaps, waxes, latex, tannins, and even contribute to the air we breathe. Ethnobotany is the study of how people make use of native plants; the study of a region's plants and their practical uses through the traditional knowledge of a local culture and people. Current use of the term implies the study of Indigenous or traditional knowledge of plants. It involves the Indigenous knowledge of plant classification, cultivation, and use as food, medicine and shelter. However, many Indigenous peoples believe that this study can be exploitative in numerous ways. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that Richard Evans Schultes, 'the father of ethnobotany' was a white American. Though he was a conservationist and worked closely with Indigenous peoples, the person who tells a story or disseminates information, matters. The voices of Indigenous people and the interests and perspectives of Indigenous communities should lead discussions. The economic focus of biological prospecting "discoveries," has highlighted important issues concerning Indigenous rights, cultural knowledge, and traditional resources. A more "precautionary" approach to ethnobotanical inquiry would assist Indigenous communities in protecting cultural heritage. The issues raised by publishing Indigenous plant knowledge are intensified by the significant uncertainties surrounding subsequent impacts on Indigenous communities whose

value systems, priorities, expectations, and time frames may differ from those of the academic community. How do we ensure Indigenous voices are prioritized? What does this have to do with our food system and Veggie Box?

Producer Spotlight *Blue Mitten Hydroponic Farms*

Blue Mitten Hydroponic Farms is an independently owned and operated, USDA GAP Certified farm located in Okemos Michigan. They provide area restaurants and markets with safe, sustainable, year-round hydroponic lettuce and microgreens. Hydroponics is the method of growing plants without soil in which the nutrients are specifically administered using mineral nutrient solutions in a constant flow of water. Coupling this modern farming technology with Blue Mitten's small but knowledgeable team of born-and-raised Michiganders, they have been improving their practices and providing high-end romaine, artisan greens, microgreens and herbs year-round, as well as seasonal offerings from their outdoor plots since December of 2016.

Crop Profile *Shishito Peppers*

Shishito peppers are a Japanese variety of the species *Capsicum annum*, which also includes bell peppers, jalapeños, and cayenne peppers. The small, thin-walled peppers are usually harvested and used when green, but if left on the plant will eventually turn red with a sweeter flavor. Most shishito peppers are mild, but about one out of every ten will display a bit of heat due to exposure to sunlight or other environmental factors, making for an enjoyable game of pepper roulette. Shishito peppers have long been a popular snack in Japan, and in recent years have gained a large following in the US. They're often eaten as an appetizer where they are roasted, grilled, or fried until charred and blistered, then sprinkled with coarse sea salt. Charring helps to bring out the rich flavors of these mild peppers, and because of their thin walls, they char and blister faster than many other varieties of pepper. Whenever they're cooked, a small hole should also be poked in them beforehand to prevent the peppers from bursting. They can also be used raw and added to salads, salsas, gazpachos, stews, and seafood dishes.



What's in the Box?

Shishito Peppers, *Blue Mitten Hydroponic Farms, Okemos*

Sweet Corn, *Felzke Farms, DeWitt*

Slicer Tomatoes, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Red Onion, *Ten Hens Farm, Bath*

Organic Basil, *Lake Divide Farm, Stockbridge, and Owosso Organics, Owosso*

Organic Bell Pepper, *Owosso Organics, Owosso*

Summer Squash, *Blue Mitten Hydroponic Farms, Okemos*

Add-Ons

Bread, *Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt*

Meat Variety, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Eggs, *Grazing Fields Cooperative, Charlotte*

Coffee, *517 Coffee Company, Lansing*

Meat, *Heffron Farms, Belding*

Chicken, *Heffron Farms, Belding*

Beef, *Heffron Farms, Belding*

Pork, *Heffron Farms, Belding*

Recipes and Tips!

Spicy Corn and Shishito Pepper Salad

3½ tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
¼ teaspoon ground cumin
Kosher salt
Veggie Box Red Onion, diced
1 clove Veggie Box Garlic, minced
3 cups of Veggie Box corn kernels
Veggie Box shishito peppers stemmed and cut crosswise into ¼-inch slices
1 Veggie Box jalapeño, seeds and ribs removed diced
¼ cup grated Cotija or crumbled feta cheese (optional), or to taste

In a small bowl, whisk 2 tablespoons olive oil with the lime juice, cumin, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Stir in the red onion and garlic and set aside until ready to use. (Do this step first so the onions and garlic have time to mellow slightly in the dressing.) Place the corn kernels in a large bowl and set aside. In a medium (10-inch) sauté pan, heat the remaining 1½ tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add the shishitos, jalapeño, and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the peppers are tender and beginning to brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the peppers and dressing to the bowl with the corn and toss well. Add the cheese, if using, and toss. Garnish with cilantro.



Classic Tomato Pie

7.5-ounce package of store-bought biscuits
2 Veggie Box tomatoes, sliced 1/4-inch thick
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
7 - 10 large Veggie Box basil leaves, cut into strips
1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese

Center the oven rack, and preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Press the biscuits against the bottom

and sides of the prepared pie plate to form a crust. Then layer the tomato slices over the crust, and give them a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Scatter the basil over the tomatoes. Blend the mayonnaise and cheese in a small bowl. Spoon the mixture over the pie, and spread it out with the back of a spoon. Bake in the preheated oven until the biscuits color and the topping puffs -- about 30 minutes. Cool on a wire rack until juices recede -- 30 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Bruschetta

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
Veggie Box tomatoes, finely chopped
kosher salt, divided
1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh Veggie Box basil
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
1 large baguette sliced in 1/4" slices

In a medium skillet over medium-low heat, heat oil. Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly golden, 2 to 4 minutes. Let cool. Meanwhile, set a large strainer over a bowl. Add tomatoes and toss with 1/2 teaspoon salt. Let sit for 5 minutes, then transfer tomatoes to a large bowl. Add basil, vinegar, red pepper, and salt to bowl with tomatoes and toss. Add garlic and oil from the skillet and toss again to combine. Let marinate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 days. Preheat oven to 400°. Brush bread on both sides with oil and arrange on a large baking sheet. Toast bread. Arrange bread on a platter. Spoon tomatoes on top of bread just before serving.