

Veggie Box Newsletter

Fall Week 6, Thursday, October 19th



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.

Growing up, he saw how small farms, particularly those owned by black folks, were disappearing due to expansion of mass agriculture. Dr. Whatley studied 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.” 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 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 you may have done with your family at some point! He also created “clientele membership clubs,” the original version of the CSA, allowing farmers to “plan production, anticipate demand and 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 used today.

Producer Spotlight *Tomac Pumpkins*

Tomac Pumpkin Farm is a 4-generation family run operation located in Chesaning, Michigan. They started as a 4-H and FFA project selling a few pumpkins, but have grown to primarily raise corn, soybeans, and wheat over the last 30 years. They also now offer almost 100 different pumpkins, gourds and squashes as well as other traditional fall decorations like corn stalks, straw, and flint corn.

Crop Profile *Butternut Squash*

The butternut squash is a member of the gourd family in the *Curcubita moschata* species, and is related to the pumpkin. Butternut squash is a winter squash that originated in Mexico. Today it is used all around the world from Africa to Australia (where they call it Butternut Pumpkin). The flavor is nutty and sweet similar to pumpkin, and can work as both a savory or sweet dish. Low in fat, butternut squash delivers an ample dose of dietary fiber, making it an exceptionally heart-friendly choice. It provides significant amounts of potassium, important for bone health, and vitamin B6, essential for the proper functioning of both the nervous and immune systems. Make a hearty winter soup, roast the seeds, or sautee in brown butter to caramelize its sweet flavor!

What's in the Box?

Blue Potatoes, Titus Farms, *Leslie*
Organic Yellow Onions, Cinzori Farms, *Ceresco*
Butternut Squash, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, *Chesaning*
Dandelion Greens "Italiko Red", Hunter Park Garden House, *Lansing's Eastside*
Ginger, Hunter Park Garden House, *Lansing's Eastside*
Carrots, Swallowtail Farm, *Mason*
Garlic, Swallowtail Farm, *Mason*
Bell Pepper, Magnolia Avenue Farms, *Lansing's Eastside*

Add-ons

Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
Maple Syrup, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, *Chesaning*
Coffee, 517 Coffee Company, *Lansing*
Tea, ANC's Youth Service Corps, *Lansing*
Kombucha, Apple Blossom Kombucha, *Lansing*
Organic Dry Beans, Ferris Organic Farms, *Eaton Rapids*
Meat, Heffron Farms Market, *Belding*

Recipes and Tips!

Sweet and Savory Butternut Soup

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup Veggie Box maple syrup
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne powder
- Kosher salt
- 1 Veggie Box butternut squash, peeled, halved, seeded, and cut into 2-inch pieces
- all Veggie Box carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch lengths
- 1 medium Veggie Box onion, halved and peeled
- 6 cloves Veggie Box garlic
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 2 cups water
- 1-inch piece fresh Veggie Box ginger, peeled and sliced

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a small bowl, whisk together oil, maple syrup, soy sauce, and chile powder; season with salt. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss squash, carrots, onions, and garlic with maple mixture; arrange in an even layer. Roast, flipping once, until veggies are very tender and caramelized in places, 40 to 45 minutes.

Transfer vegetables to a large pot with any accumulated juices. Add stock, water, and ginger. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, partially covered, 30 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Working in batches, transfer soup to a blender and puree until smooth (alternately, puree with an immersion blender). Garnish with caramelized onions, a scoop of plain yogurt, toasted squash seeds (see below), or a squeeze of lemon.



Unicorn Mashed Potatoes

- 1.5 lb Veggie Box blue potatoes, washed
- 1/3 cup milk
- 3 tablespoons butter
- Salt + Pepper to taste

Boil whole blue potatoes in a large saucepan with heavily salted water until they become fork tender.

In a smaller saucepan or microwave-safe bowl, heat the milk and butter together.

When potatoes are tender, drain and return to the pot. Using a masher, mash the potatoes.

Add the hot milk and butter and mix until creamy. Test for seasoning and add more salt if needed. If the puree is too stiff, add some more milk and butter.

Cheesy Variation: Blend in white cheese to leave the striking color intact (consider cream cheese or parmesan).

Maximum Unicorn: Garnish with pink salt and edible flower petals, such as chive blossoms, pansies, or flowering basil.



Photo from LivingSweetMoments.com

Squash Seed Pepitas

Squash seeds can be roasted like pumpkin seeds. Use them to jazz up any dish with extra flavor and crunch!

Scoop seeds out of squash along with the stringy flesh. Separate your seeds by soaking them in water. Arrange in a single layer on baking sheet. Pat dry, coat with olive oil and a sprinkle of salt and, if desired, your choice of additional spices. Roast at 325 F for approximately 14 minutes, stirring halfway. The cooked seeds should be lightly browned and starting to pop. Once cool, store in an airtight container for up to three months.