

# Veggie Box Newsletter

Week 12, Thursday August 17



Welcome to week 12 of the Summer Veggie Box! What are the differences between big agribusinesses and small farms? The truth is, they both have their pros and cons. Large farms are often more efficient than small farms, since they can afford all the fancy machinery and they use mono-cropping (growing the same crop on large numbers of acres) which can yield greater profits. For this reason, large agribusinesses are able to sell their products at relatively low prices, which attracts many consumers. Despite efficiency, large farms tend to rely on chemical fertilizers and pesticides to restore their soil, since mono-cropping depletes the soil of its nutrients. These chemicals are often not handled responsibly and cause pollution. In fact, agriculture is the largest source of pollution of lakes and rivers. Additionally, large farms contribute to air pollution due to the miles of travel from farms to grocery stores across the country. Small local farms are better for the environment, as they require less travel, packaging, refrigeration, and usually less chemicals. Small farms also benefit their communities by maintaining open land and reminding neighbors where their food comes from, and by buying and selling to local neighbors, which keeps food systems regional. Thank you for helping the environment and our community as you support our local farms.

## What's in the Box?

**Peaches**, *Phillips Orchard & Cider Mill, St. Johns*  
**Cherry Tomatoes**, *Peckham Farms, Lansing*  
**Organic Carrots**, *Monroe Organics, Ada*  
**Organic Garlic**, *Owosso Organics, Owosso*  
**Organic Bell Peppers/Bullhorn Peppers**,  
*Owosso Organics, Owosso*  
**Organic Cipollini Onions**, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*  
**Organic Baby Eggplant**, *Cinzori Farms, Ceresco*

## Add-Ons

**Bread**, *Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt*  
**Meat Variety**, *Heffron Farms, Belding*  
**Cheese**, *Hickory Knoll Creamery, Onondaga*  
**Chevre**, *Hickory Knoll Creamery, Onondaga*

## Producer Spotlight *Phillips Orchard & Cider Mill*

Phillips Orchards and Cider Mill, located in St. John's, has been around for quite some time - since 1852! That's five years older than MSU. They grow over 30 varieties of apples as well as 14 Michigan developed varieties of peaches. A trip to Phillips Orchard is often a family tradition in the Lansing area.

## Crop Profile *Eggplant*

Eggplant is grown for its edible spongy absorbent fruit widely used in cooking. Originating in modern day India and China, eggplant has been cultivated for thousands of years and is a popular vegetable in global cuisine. Most people consider it a vegetable despite its botanical definition as a berry fruit, a member of the genus *Solanum* related to the tomato and the potato. Like the tomato its skin and seeds can be eaten, but like the potato it is not to be eaten raw. Raw eggplant can have a bitter taste, with an astringent quality, but it becomes tender when cooked and develops a rich, complex flavor. The fruit is capable of absorbing large amounts of cooking fats and sauces, enhancing the flavor of dishes. A few classic uses of this vegetable include eggplant parmesan, ratatouille, and the classic Lebanese dish - baba ganoush! There are so many possibilities for this versatile veggie.

# Recipes and Tips!

## Sweet and Spicy Grilled Cheese

- 2 Veggie Box peaches, halved and pitted
- ½ teaspoon ground ancho chile pepper
- 4 slices sourdough bread
- 3 ounce sliced sharp white cheddar cheese
- 1 poblano pepper, roasted\* and cut into strips
- 4 slices bacon, crisp-cooked
- 2 tablespoon mayonnaise

**Roast Poblanos: Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut pepper in half lengthwise; remove stems and seeds. Place cut sides down on a foil-lined baking sheet. Roast until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. When cool enough to handle, peel and discard skin.**

**Sprinkle peach halves with ground chile. Using large flat item, gently smash peach halves to 1/2-inch thickness. Top two bread slices with: cheese slices, peach halves, poblano strips, and bacon. Top with remaining bread slices. Spread mayo on exterior bread. Cook sandwiches in a hot skillet over medium 2 to 3 minutes or until toasted. Turn; repeat on other side until cheese melts.**

Adapted from Better Homes & Gardens



## Eggplant Parmesan

- 2 Veggie Box eggplants
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 teaspoon sea salt, divided
- Veggie Box onion, minced
- 2 Veggie Box garlic cloves, minced
- Veggie Box tomatoes, crushed
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1.5 ounces (about 3/4 cup) grated parmesan cheese
- 6 ounces grated mozzarella cheese (about 1.5 cups)
- Minced basil, for garnish

**Preheat oven to 420 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut the tops off the eggplants then cut them into 1/2 " thick slices. Lay them on the baking sheet, drizzle them with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and sprinkle them 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Roast in the oven for 25 minutes. While the eggplants are cooking, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a medium-sized pot. Add the onion and cook until it is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, honey, and tomatoes and cook for 15-20 minutes, or until the sauce has thickened. Reduce the heat, cover the pot, and simmer until the eggplants are cooked. Spread 1/2 cup of the sauce in a 9 " x9 " pan. Add a layer of eggplants, top with 1/2 cup of sauce and 1/3 of both the cheeses. Repeat until you run out of eggplant so that you have several layers. Put the pan into the oven and bake until the eggplant parmesan is bubbly and the cheese starts to brown, about 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and let it rest for at least 15 minutes (or up to 30 minutes) before cutting into it.**

