

Veggie Box Newsletter

Spring 2024 · Week 6 · Thursday, April 4th

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 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.

Producer Spotlight *Highwater Farms*

At Highwater Farms, their mission is to create a sustainable relationship between the land, their products, and their customers. They work to provide heirloom and rare varieties of produce and flowers to customers via several channels in order to ensure freshness, availability, and convenience. All of their plants are chemical-free, pesticide-free, and herbicide-free. All farming practices are strategically implemented to address the health and safety of the land and the consumer. They grow exclusively in Lansing and strive to give back 5% of all sales to a rotating group of local charities and causes.

Crop Profile *Microgreens*

Microgreens are essentially seedlings of edible vegetables and herbs, and though miniscule in size, concentrated in nutrients. Studies have shown that microgreens are loaded with nutrients - up to 40 times more than the mature leaves of the same plants. They are different from sprouts because they are harvested without the roots. Usually, the seeds are grown in trays with soil or peat moss and harvested a few weeks after they are initially soaked depending on the variety. Microgreens are great on salads, sandwiches, and in smoothies! Chefs started utilizing these nutrient packed greens in the 80s in San Francisco and have grown in popularity all over the country and world since then. To make microgreens last, carefully dry them and store in an airtight container for up to a week.



What's in the Box?

Organic Daikon Radish, MSU Student Organic Farm, Holt

Microgreens, Highwater Farms, Lansing

Organic Spring Mix, Monroe Family Organics, Alma

Organic Green Garlic, Monroe Family Organics, Alma

Organic Spinach, Monroe Family Organics, Alma

Organic Sweet Potatoes, Green Wagon Farm, Ada

Organic Swiss Chard, Green Wagon Farm, Ada

Add-ons

Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, Holt

Meat Variety: Beef Strips, Heffron Farms, Belding

Recipes and Tips!

Wilted Chard with Shallots and Vinegar

- Veggie Box Swiss chard, ribs and stems separated from leaves
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup shallots, thinly sliced into rings (or onions)
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- Kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar

Cut Swiss chard stems into very small pieces. Tear leaves into 2" pieces and rinse well (you'll want some water still clinging to the leaves).

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add chard stems, shallots, garlic, and season with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are starting to soften but haven't taken on any color, about 2 minutes.

Add chard leaves, season with salt, and cook, tossing occasionally, until leaves are tender and have released some liquid, about 3 minutes (stems will have a bit of crunch). Mix in vinegar; taste and season with more salt if needed.



Crustless Veggie Quiche

- 5 Veggie Box eggs
- 1 cup whole milk
- 4 ounces of your preferred cheese (fontina, mozzarella, feta, etc)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil, plus more for the pan
- 8 ounces sliced mushrooms
- 2 last week's Veggie Box yellow onions or shallots, minced
- 4 Veggie Box garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 ½ tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- full share of Veggie Box spinach

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Brush a 9-inch pie plate with olive oil and set it on a baking sheet. In a large bowl, aggressively whisk together the eggs and milk. Cube the Fontina cheese and set aside.

Set a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil to the skillet. Once the oil begins to shimmer, add the mushrooms, onion, and garlic. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook until the mushrooms shrink and the onions are translucent, about 10 to 15 minutes depending upon the size of your mushrooms. Drizzle the balsamic vinegar over the vegetables and stir, cooking for another minute or two. Add the spinach and thyme, stir until spinach is wilted, about 3 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning to your liking.

Add the cooked vegetables to the pie plate, sprinkle with cubed cheese, and pour the egg mixture over the top. It should be full up to the rim. Carefully transfer the baking sheet to the oven.

Set the timer for 35 minutes and bake until the center is set. Let cool at room temperature for about 10 minutes before serving.

*Recipe adapted from
www.themediterraneandish.com*