

Veggie Box Newsletter

Spring 2024 · Week 8 · Thursday, April 18th

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Veggie Box

Food is fun! It can be a powerful tool for human connection. As I've begun rebuilding my social life following the isolation of the covid pandemic, hosting friends for dinner has brought a lot of joy back into our household. I get the feeling I'm not alone, since the Los Angeles Times featured two books on hosting in their Best Cookbooks of 2023 lineup: 'The Dinner Party: A Chef's Guide to Home Entertaining' by Martin Benn and Vicki Wild; and 'The Dinner Party Project: A No-Stress Guide to Food with Friends' by Natasha Feldman (the latter of which is available from the Capital Area District Library)! These are good starting places for finding large-batch recipes and hosting tips.

Here are a few ideas from my family to yours when hosting a dinner party:

- Fancy sauces can quickly elevate a meal, and you can freeze them for easy meal prep. You can try the basic pesto recipe with your Veggie Box greens featured on the back of this newsletter!
- A few little cozy touches around the house have helped me feel more prepared. A puzzle on the table, a beverage station, and a playlist of company-friendly music are some ideas that work well for our house.
- Cooking a large dinner can be a struggle, and then tacking personal preferences onto that... meal planning can be a doozy! Our family and friends have enjoyed meals that allow guests to pick and choose ingredients. Consider the many possible variations on a build-your-own bar, such as sushi bowls, grilled cheese or nachos.

Sharing a meal is just one way Veggie Box can connect you to others. Local veggies make excellent thank you gifts. You could mention to a farmer how much you enjoyed something they grew if you see them (maybe at the farmers market)! Offering your box to a friend on a week you'll be out of town is another way to share the joy of local food. We hope you find opportunities to connect with others this Veggie Box season!

- Iris Paul, Food Hub Assistant Manager

Producer Spotlight *Stone Circle Bakehouse*

Stone Circle Bakehouse of Holt, Michigan, specializes in the European tradition of artisanal bread that is cut, scaled, and shaped by hand. Owner Kevin Cosgrove allows his dough to slowly ferment before baking it on the deck of his wood-fired oven. At Stone Circle Bakehouse, the innovative deliciousness stems from Cosgrove's desire to preserve traditional baking methods, rather than change them. Organic, local ingredients are prioritized when possible to bring customers fresh, environmentally and community friendly baked goods.

Crop Profile *Red Russian Kale*

You can tell a Russian kale by its leaf shape, which is flatter and has deeper leaf sinuses than the curly kale you received earlier this season. The stunning purplish-red stems give this kale variety the name "Red Russian." Red Russian kale has a more mild, sweet taste compared to other varieties, with nutty, earthy notes. Kale is incredibly nutritionally dense, boasting more than a day's worth of vitamin A in a single cup serving, as well as being full of vitamins K, C, B6, manganese, calcium and magnesium. Kale was historically significant during World War II when rations caused people to lack key nutrients. Kale production increased to help fill some of the nutritional gaps. These days, Kale has many uses, such as in salads, soups, smoothies, and casseroles. To keep kale for up to a week, wrap the bunch in paper towels in a plastic bag and store in the fridge crisper drawer.

What's in the Box?

- Organic Summer Crisp Lettuce**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Red Radishes**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Carrots**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Tatsoi**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Red Russian Kale**, MSU Student Organic Farm, *Holt*
- Organic Green Garlic**, MSU Student Organic Farm, *Holt*
- Purple Viking Potatoes**, Titus Farms, *Leslie*

Add-ons

- Bread**, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
- Meat Variety: Pork Chops**, Grazing Fields Cooperative, *Charlotte*

Recipes and Tips!

Potato and Kale Hash with Eggs

- 1 share Veggie Box potatoes, shredded
- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- Veggie Box green garlic (white and light green section), thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 share Veggie Box kale, stems removed and leaves chopped
- ½ cup shredded Gouda cheese, preferably smoked
- 2 large eggs

Position a rack in lower third of oven; preheat to 450F. Coat a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.

Shred potatoes (peeled or unpeeled). Transfer shredded potatoes to a bowl of cold water. Stir potatoes in water to loosen starch off potatoes, then drain. Repeat this process until water runs clear. Drain as much water off as possible, drying with paper towels or clean dish towel if possible. You can even squeeze them between several layers of cheesecloth.

Remove stems from kale and chop leaves.

Combine potatoes, onion, oil, mustard, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Spread onto baking sheet. Roast for 10 minutes. Layer kale and green garlic evenly over potato mixture. Roast for 5 minutes. Stir everything on pan until combined. Continue roasting until kale is tender and potatoes start to brown, 4 to 6 minutes more.

Carefully push hash into 2 "nests" and make a well in the center of each, large enough for an egg. Sprinkle 1/4 cup cheese into each well, then carefully break 1 egg into each. Bake, rotating the pan 180 degrees about halfway through, until the whites are barely set, 7 to 11 minutes. (The eggs will continue to cook a little more out of the oven.)

Recipe adapted from eatingwell.com



Basic Pesto Recipe

Traditionally, pesto calls for basil and pine nuts. But don't let the season hold you back from this comforting, earthy sauce! You can make pesto out of a wide variety of greens and nuts/seeds.

- 2 cups green(s) of your choice (a blend of herbs, spinach, kale, pea shoots, etc)
- ½ cup nuts or seeds (walnuts, pine nuts, sunflower seeds, pepitas, pistachios, etc)
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese, freshly grated (or another hard, salty aged cheese like asiago or manchego)
- 2 garlic cloves (or try using Veggie Box green garlic)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Optional add-ins: Make this recipe your own. Consider adding one or a couple of these flavorful additions.
 - lemon juice
 - lemon zest
 - cherry tomatoes

Throughout this recipe, scrape the bowl of your food processor as needed. Add you nuts/seeds, garlic, salt and pepper to a food processor. Process until peanut butter like, approx. one minute. Add cheese and half the oil, then process until smooth, approx. 10 to 20 seconds.

Roughly chop your greens, then add them to the food processor along with the cheese mixture. Pulse about ten times, scraping the bowl several times as needed. The greens should now be finely chopped and combined. Add the remaining oil and pulse until just combined, about two pulses. The pesto should be creamy, thick and spreadable.

Pesto is versatile both in the ingredients you can use to make it, as well as what you can serve it on. Pasta is an obvious (and delicious) choice, but pesto is also excellent dolloped onto a slice of quiche, stirred into a grain bowl, and even on your scrambled eggs!

Tips: Tenderize Your Kale!

Remove the stem and slice your kale into ribbons. Massage the leaves with a splash of olive oil and salt to tenderize the leaves, breaking down their tough texture. Continue massaging until the color darkens and the leaves wilt. Massaging the kale removes bitterness, leaving you with the base for an excellent salad!

