

Veggie Box Newsletter

Summer 2024 · Week 6 · Tuesday, July 9th

When my daughter was one year old, we were fortunate to move down the street from Allen Neighborhood Center. I was a young, low income single mom. Each Monday, we'd come to the Breadbasket Food Pantry. We were so grateful for this resource, but some weeks it went further than others—sometimes, the inventory was low by the time we could get there, or the produce quickly expired. An ANC staff member let me know about the new Subsidized Veggie Box Program, which made Veggie Boxes available to Eastside neighbors with children for only \$5 a week. Signing up changed our lives! We knew for sure we'd have access to high quality, affordable produce for an entire season, and we were treated the same as every other member.

When I joined ANC as the food hub assistant manager last September, I was honored to take on coordinating Subsidized Veggie Box. The program has steadily grown, and is now open to anyone who self-identifies as experiencing a hardship which makes accessing fresh produce difficult. Subsidized members are responsible for a small weekly payment, and the remaining cost is contributed by fellow Veggie Box members who love the program so much, they want to donate to make sure any neighbor who wants to participate is able.

This summer, ANC began participating in the Michigan Farm to Family: CSA program (through Michigan Fitness Foundation), which allows us to offer additional reduced cost memberships to members who pay with an EBT card. We were able to provide a reduced cost membership to nearly 11% of our total membership thanks to donors, corporate sponsors and grant funding! - Iris Paul, Food Hub Assistant Manager

Questions about Reduced Cost Veggie Box?

Contact me: IrisP@AllenNeighborhoodCenter.org

Producer Spotlight *Monroe Family Organics*

Monroe Family Organics is the fruition of a dream set in motion almost 20 years ago, and finally realized in 2011. After having a stall at the local Alma farmers market the summer he was 16, Fred Monroe was hooked on organic vegetable production. While at MSU studying horticulture and agribusiness, he worked at the MSU Student Organic Farm and interned at a large CSA south of Chicago. In 2010, Fred and his wife Michele set to work acquiring land buying a house, and rounding up equipment for the first farm season. Over the next few years, they continued to add more crops, more animals, more CSA drop-offs, more delivery options, and more local mid-Michigan store and restaurant partners. 2024 marks their 14th growing season!

Crop Profile *Blueberries*

Blueberries are native to North America and include a variety of species from the section *Cyanococcus* in the genus *Vaccinium*. Blueberry shrubs can vary in height from about four inches to 13 feet. In commercial cultivation, the smaller species are called "lowbush blueberries" and include managed collections of wild blueberries, while the bigger species are known as "highbush blueberries". The large, plump berries we know so well today are relatively new. Around 1910, Elizabeth White, a New Jersey cranberry producer, and USDA botanist Frederick Coleman began breeding wild blueberries. By 1916, their work created the very first domestic varieties, which had larger, sweeter fruits and turned blueberries into a valuable commercial crop. Today, Michigan is the number one state in highbush blueberry production with over 100 million pounds harvested each year. These antioxidant-packed berries are a sweet treat eaten raw, in a smoothie, baked into a blueberry cobbler, or made into tangy preserves. **Tip:** Rinse blueberries right before you eat them and not before you put them in the fridge to maximize freshness.



What's in the Box?

Blueberries, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
Salad Mix, Hunter Park GardenHouse, *Lansing*
Organic Cucumber, MSU Student Organic Farm, *Holt*
Organic Tomatoes, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
Organic New Red Potatoes, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
Organic Green Onions, Monroe Family Organics, *Alma*
Organic Cabbage, Monroe Family Organics, *Alma*

Add-ons

Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
Meat Variety: Beef Strips, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Coffee, 517 Coffee Company, *Lansing*
Tea, ANC's Youth Service Corps, *Lansing*
Kombucha, Apple Blossom Kombucha, *Lansing*
Maple Syrup, Tomac Pumpkin Patch, *Chesaning*
Honey, Beebehavior Ranch, *Ovid*

Want to support Subsidized Veggie Box?

Visit: bit.ly/vbdonate

Recipes and Tips!

Ethiopian Aicha

Inspired by Teff-Riffic, beloved Allen Farmers Market vendor

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 head Veggie Box cabbage, shredded
- 1 Veggie Box tomato, chopped
- 6 stalks of last week's Veggie Box garlic scapes sliced 1", or 5 cloves of garlic finely minced
- 4-5 Veggie Box potatoes, cubed
- 3 large carrots, chopped into 1" slices
- 1 to 4 tablespoons butter, or vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger, or grated fresh
- 2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup oil (canola recommended)

In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Once shimmering, add onions and cook for 5 minutes, until translucent. Stir in garlic, ginger, cumin powder, and 1 tsp of the turmeric (reserve the rest of the turmeric for next step). Cook for 1 minute.

Add carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, broth, salt, pepper, and the rest of the turmeric. Mix well to infuse with spices. Cover and cook 20 min on medium heat.

Add potatoes. Cook for 20-30 minutes. Check for doneness-- the carrots, cabbage and potatoes should be cooked through but not mushy. If needed, cook a few more minutes until soft. Serve hot with rice or flatbread!



Blueberry Summer Salad

- 1 bag Veggie Box salad mix
- 1/2 Veggie Box cucumber, halved lengthwise, peeled, seeded, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup Veggie Box blueberries
- 2 Veggie Box green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup sliced almonds
- 1 1/2 tbsp sugar
- 2 tbsps finely grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup of your favorite balsamic salad dressing
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place almonds in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Stir in sugar and cook, stirring continuously until sugar melts and coats almonds, 6-8 minutes. Watch carefully to avoid burning. Transfer almonds to a sheet of parchment paper to cool. Once cool, break apart before using.

In a large bowl, toss the salad mix with salt and pepper to taste. Toss in blueberries, cucumber slices, green onions, and parmesan cheese. Toss in balsamic dressing, then top with cooled sugared almonds. Serve immediately.

Recipe adapted from HowSweetEats.com