

Veggie Box Newsletter

Summer 2024 · Week 8 · Tuesday, July 23rd

Fermentation: The what, why, and how

Fermentation is the process of bacteria or yeasts breaking down carbohydrates in different foods into alcohol or acids. Yeast converts sugar into alcohol and bacteria converts sugar to make acids. People have been fermenting food for thousands of years! The first fermented foods are thought to be different milks, and alcoholic beverages most likely made from grains, honey, fruit, or rice.

Why ferment food? Fermentation is great for extending the shelf life of foods you know you won't eat right away: depending on the vegetable, storage, and ferment they can last up to 18 months. Many fermented foods like yogurt, kombucha, kefir, and specific sauerkrauts have probiotics which are great for gut health and digestion. They work by increasing the good bacteria in your gut to help fight off bad bacteria.

Fermenting different foods is something that's easy to do at home! Some of the easiest things to ferment at home are sauerkraut, pickles, kimchi, and sourdough bread. Most of these foods you can make with veggie box vegetables! With things like sauerkraut; recipes, temperature, and ferment times need to be followed exactly as to not accidentally make and consume harmful bacteria.

You can learn more about the magic of fermentation on Saturday, August 3 at 10am with ELFCO's own Milton Shoup, right here at the Allen Neighborhood Center incubator kitchen. Check out your What's In the Box email for registration info!

Producer Spotlight *Ten Hens Farm*

Adam and Dru Montri have been farming in Bath, Michigan since 2007 with their two daughters and three employees. Their produce is grown on three acres, in six hoophouses totaling over 17,000 sq ft and in one heated greenhouse. Dru and Adam both went to Michigan State and Penn State to study horticulture and worked together on numerous farms before starting Ten Hens Farm. They are proud to have provided produce for the Veggie Box since the program started. As of 2024, Ten Hens Farm is on hiatus since Adam has moved into a regional agriculture policy job. However, they still wanted to grow one last round of garlic for Veggie Box!

Crop Profile *Sweet Corn*

Corn was domesticated from a grass called Teocintle by the peoples of Meso-America approximately 10,000 years ago. The yellow corn commonly found in the United States pales in comparison to the shapes, sizes, and colors of the traditional maize varieties cultivated by the indigenous peoples of Mexico. The ears of corn may range from a couple of inches to a foot long, in colors that include white, red, yellow, blue, and black. Some varieties even have an assortment of colors on one ear. Sweet corn is a variety of maize with a high sugar content, and was grown by a number of indigenous tribes. Corn is also one of the three sisters in Iroquois agriculture and tradition, along with beans and winter squash. In a technique known as companion planting the three crops are planted close together. The maize provides a structure for the beans to climb, eliminating the need for poles. The beans provide the nitrogen to the soil that the other plants use, and the squash spreads along the ground, blocking the sunlight, helping prevent the establishment of weeds. Store sweet corn in the fridge in a loose bag for up to 3 days.



What's in the Box?

- Garlic**, Ten Hens Farm, *Bath*
- Organic Butterhead Lettuce**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Salad Turnips**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Parsley**, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
- Organic Red Potatoes**, Monroe Family Organics, *Alma*
- Organic Spanish Onions**, Monroe Family Organics, *Alma*
- Sweet Corn**, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
- Green Beans**, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*

Add-ons

- Bread**, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
- Coffee (bi-weekly)**, Flora Coffee Roasters, Michigan
- Meat Variety: Breakfast Patties**, Grazing Fields Cooperative, *Charlotte*

Recipes and Tips!

Chicken Lettuce Wraps

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound ground chicken
- 2 cloves Veggie Box garlic, minced
- 1 Veggie Box onion, diced
- ¼ cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha, optional
- 1 (8-ounce) can whole water chestnuts, drained and diced
- 2 last week's Veggie Box green onions, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 Veggie Box butterhead lettuce

Heat olive oil in a large cast iron skillet over medium high heat. Add ground chicken and cook until browned, about 3-5 minutes, making sure to crumble the chicken as it cooks; drain excess fat.

Stir in garlic, onion, hoisin sauce, soy sauce, rice wine vinegar, ginger and Sriracha until onions have become translucent, about 1-2 minutes.

Stir in chestnuts and green onions until tender, about 1-2 minutes; season with salt and pepper, to taste. To serve, spoon several tablespoons of the chicken mixture into the center of a lettuce leaf, taco-style.



Quick Pickled Salad Turnips

- 1 full share Veggie Box salad turnips
- 1 cup piping hot water
- 1/2 cup rice wine or white distilled vinegar
- 6 tbsp sugar
- 2 1/4 tsp kosher salt
- Optional: peppercorns, smashed garlic cloves, bay leaf

Rinse turnips in cold water, and scrub well to remove excess dirt. Trim the tops of the turnips, leaving an inch or less of the stem attached to the bulb. Pack turnips into a quart jar.

Combine hot water with sugar in a medium mixing bowl, stirring until the sugar dissolves entirely. Add vinegar and salt and combine. Pour brine over turnips, cover jar, and refrigerate. Add optional mix-ins for additional flavor. The turnips will be at their best in about a week, and will last for months!

Cajun Boil

I love a Cajun Boil dinner because it's fast, delicious and flexible! You can adjust this recipe to your household's preferences, using seafood, meat and/or vegetarian options.

- 16-20 cups water
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 crab boil seasoning in a bag like Zatarain's
- 1 lemon, quartered
- 1 Veggie Box onion, peeled and quartered
- 4 Veggie Box ears corn on the cob, shucked, cut into halves or thirds
- 1.5 lb Veggie Box red potatoes, washed, halved
- 1 lb Veggie Box green beans, trimmed
- 4 links your favorite sausage (or meat substitute)
- 1/2 cup butter or vegan substitute
- Optional: Lemon juice and your favorite seasonings

Add the water, salt, crab boil seasoning bag, lemon quarters, and onion quarters to a very large pot. Bring the pot to a boil. Add the corn and potatoes into the pot carefully (maybe even wear long sleeves to avoid burns). Return pot to boil. This takes 5-10 minutes.

Continue to boil about 8-12 minutes or until the potatoes are almost fork-tender. Meanwhile, prep butter and sausage as below.

Add green beans. Continue to boil until all veggies are tender. Drain the pot carefully into a large colander.

Add the veggies to your plate along with cooked meat. Place melted butter in a sauce cup for dipping. Dig in!

Butter prep: Melt butter. If desired, add lemon juice or your favorite seasonings to melted butter. Set aside for dipping.

Sausage prep: Cut sausage links lengthwise, then into thirds or quarters. Heat oil in a large skillet. Add sausage and sauté until browned.

Recipe adapted from www.karissasvegankitchen.com

Tips: Uncured Garlic

Unlike cured garlic, uncured or fresh garlic hasn't been left to dry its papery skin! This makes the flavor a little milder and perfect for raw uses, and means the bulbs should be stored differently. Uncured garlic should be stored in an open plastic bag in your crisper drawer - somewhere dark, moist, and cool with good ventilation. The storage life is shorter than fully cured garlic, but it is used exactly the same way in recipes!

