

Veggie Box Newsletter

Summer 2024 · Week 13 · Tuesday, August 27th



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. Growing up, he saw how small farms - particularly those owned by Black folks - were disappearing due to expansion of mass agriculture. He went on to earn 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 earned 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 you may have 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 *Wildflower Eco Farm*

Drawn to farming due to the combination of physical and mental work, Phil Throop achieved his MS in Horticulture from Michigan State University and has continued farming ever since. He established his own 3.5 acre farm in Bath Township, MI, and named it for the wonderful array of wildflowers throughout the property. Wildflower Eco Farm specializes in using sustainable growing practices with over sixty types of fruits and vegetables. They offer their own CSA and are familiar faces at many of the area's Farmer's Markets.

Crop Profile *Shishito Peppers*

Shishito peppers are a Japanese variety of *Capsicum annuum*, which also includes bell peppers, jalapeños, and cayenne peppers. The small, thin-walled peppers are usually harvested and used when green, but if left on the plant they will eventually turn red with an increasingly sweeter flavor. Most shishito peppers are mild, but about one out of every ten will display a bit of heat due to exposure to sunlight or other environmental factors, making for an enjoyable game of pepper roulette. Originally from Japan, the shishito pepper is named after the appearance of its tip, which resembles the head of a lion (shishi in Japanese). Shishito peppers have long been a popular snack in Japan, and have recently gained a large following in the US. They're often eaten as an appetizer where they are roasted, grilled, or fried until blistered, then sprinkled with coarse salt. Charring helps to bring out the rich flavors of these mild peppers. Whenever they're cooked, a small hole should also be poked in them beforehand to prevent the peppers from bursting. They can also be used raw and added to salads, salsas, gazpachos, stews, and seafood dishes.

What's in the Box?

Thai Basil, Hunter Park GardenHouse, *Lansing*
Tomatoes, Magnolia Avenue Farms, *Lansing OR*
Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
Jalapenos, Magnolia Avenue Farms, *Lansing*
Organic Salad Turnips, Lake Divide Farm, *Stockbridge*
Sweet Corn, Felzke Farms, *Dewitt*
Shishito Peppers, Titus Farms, *Leslie*
Mini Eggplants, Titus Farms, *Leslie*
Summer Squash, Titus Farms, *Leslie*
Garlic, Wildflower Eco Farm, *Bath*

Add-ons

Eggs, Grazing Fields Cooperative, *Charlotte*
Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
Meat Variety: Chicken Leg Quarters, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Chicken: Breast, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Beef: Boneless Chuck Roast, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Pork: Bacon, Heffron Farms, *Belding*
Organic Dry Beans: Adzuki, Ferris Organic Farm, *Eaton Rapids*

Recipes and Tips!

Veggie Box Ratatouille

- 3 Veggie Box garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- medium white onion, sliced ¼-inch-thick
- full share Veggie Box summer squash, sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds
- full share Veggie Box mini eggplants chopped into 1-inch cubes
- full share last week's sweet peppers, or this week's jalapenos (or both!), seeded and sliced into ¼-inch-thick strips
- 1/2 tablespoon Italian herb blend
- olive oil
- full share Veggie Box tomatoes
- 1 Veggie Box garlic clove, finely grated
- 2 bay leaves
- 1½ teaspoons fine sea salt, more as needed
- freshly ground black pepper

Heat oven to 400 degrees.

Prepare 3 garlic cloves, onion, summer squash and eggplant. Spread each vegetable on a separate rimmed baking sheet, adding the 3 cloves of smashed garlic to the onion pan. Sprinkle salt lightly over vegetables. Drizzle olive oil on each of the pans and toss until coated.

Place all the pans in the oven (or work in batches if they don't fit at once). Cook until vegetables are very tender and lightly browned at the edges. Each vegetable may take a different amount of time, so check and stir every 10 minutes at the start and every five minutes as they begin to brown. Pepper skins should be shriveled. The eggplant should crisp slightly and the zucchini should be well cooked, so let them go 3 to 5 minutes longer than you normally might.

In the meantime, prepare the tomatoes. Blanch tomatoes in a pot of boiling water for about ten seconds (until their skin splits). Quickly transfer the tomatoes to a bowl of ice water. Peel the cooled tomatoes, halve them. Set a sieve over a bowl. Working over the sieve, use your fingers to seed the tomatoes. Discard seeds but save juices. Dice tomatoes and add to the reserved juices in bowl. Finely grate or mince remaining garlic clove. Add garlic to tomatoes along with bay leaves and a large pinch of salt. Set aside.

Once vegetables are done cooking, combine them in a baking dish and add ingredients from tomato bowl and Italian herbs mix (Toss well. Pour a coating of olive oil over the top and sprinkle with salt. Everything should have a good coat of oil, but should not be drowning in it. Cook at least 1 hour, stirring every 15 to 20 minutes, until vegetables are very tender and imbued with juices and oil. Add salt and pepper to taste and remove bay leaves. Serve warm by itself, over pasta, or on toast.



Roasted Sweet Corn

- Veggie Box corn, still in husk
- Butter
- Salt

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Place corn in the husk directly onto the oven rack.

Roast for 30 minutes. Remove the center cob and pull back the husks just enough to test for doneness; the corn should have swollen shiny kernels with a few browned ones too.

Remove the corn from the oven and place on a cooling rack. Let cool for 15 minutes. Wrap a kitchen towel around the base of a corn cob to hold it without getting burned as the husks retain some heat. Pull back the husks and silks at the same time; they will come off easily.

Spread butter on corn and sprinkle with salt. Consider using a flavored butter to take it to the next level, like the one below. Enjoy!

Garlic Herb Compound Butter

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 head Veggie Box garlic
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, like parsley, rosemary, thyme, or chives
- ¼ teaspoon salt, optional
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper

Remove butter from refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove excess papers from outside of garlic head. Slice off ¼" from the top of the head of garlic (the wide/root end) to expose cloves. Discard top portion. Make a little bowl of foil to set the head of garlic in, which helps hold the garlic cloves together and upright. Drizzle the top with olive oil, then cover completely with foil. Roast in the oven for about 40-50 minutes, or until garlic is soft throughout and lightly browned. Remove from oven and allow to cool.

In a food processor, add butter, fresh herbs, salt, pepper, and roasted garlic cloves (discarding any papers). Blend until ingredients are evenly incorporated.

Spoon butter onto a sheet of wax paper, parchment, or plastic wrap, form into a log, and wrap tightly. Refrigerate and slice as needed.