

THE PRODUCE BOX

"We are the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe. And reclaiming democratic control over our food and water and our ecological survival is the necessary project for our freedom"

Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy*

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BOX A Blueberries Strawberries Romaine Lettuce Pointed Head Cabbage Cucumbers 1.5 shares of tomatoes	BOX B 2 lbs Strawberries 1 bunch sweet Texas onions Sweet Potatoes 1.5 shares of tomatoes 2 Romaine Lettuces	BOX C 1 pint blueberries Sweet Onions Romaine Lettuce Surprise Item New Red Beets Bok Choy	BOX D Red or Green Bibb Lettuce: Spring or Texas Onions 1.5 shares of tomatoes 1 pint blueberries Early squash sample Bok Choy

Hello everyone!

It was a busy week at The Produce Box as we began using the refrigerated area to hold our boxes overnight. What a difference! We've gone three years without it, but this hot, muggy spring combined with super sweet, wet strawberries almost drove me crazy and you too, I know. I spoke with a farmer-friend who we don't buy from but who I know from the "good agricultural practices (GAP) certification program we participated in, and he said his strawberry plants are awful. That he'll pick one bucket of perfect berries, and then the next ones are ready for the compost pile. It's been a weird season.

Some of you may remember that it was the peaches last year, and the challenges we had with the heat. I think this cooling room may solve most of the issues, but we have a Plan C under our hat if it really heats up in the next few weeks.

Thanks SO much for leaving coolers out...more and more of you are remembering to do so and that really helps to keep your produce in good shape.

We aren't requiring you to let us know within a certain time frame about replacements, but sometimes there are questions about how long produce should "keep" or a member will ask for a replacement because it "went bad" within a few days. Keep in mind that even after a fruit or vegetable is picked, it is REALLY still somewhat "alive" and producing energy. Even as it's in the box, or on your counter.

Part of the trade-off of buying SO fresh and SO local is that we're not adding any sort of preserving process to the produce (say that ten times fast!). And we're picking it at the peak of ripeness. Grocery stores and farmers markets struggle with the same issue. Do we send something a bit less ripe so it lasts a bit longer? Or perfectly ripe so you can eat it right away? And do we tell farmers we want specifically produce that's exactly in-between NOT TOO RIPE and NOT RIPE ENOUGH. Do we ask them to go to that HUGE extra effort? It's a challenging thing, I'll tell you. With most produce, we can give you a bit of both. A couple of less ripe tomatoes, a couple of more ripe. Same with peaches, etc. But in some cases we're at the mercy of nature. I would say eat the fruit pretty quick each week, within a day or two. And the lettuces as well. Other things can usually wait. But don't hold the berries until Monday or Tuesday to eat, for sure. Anyway, hope this helps you understand a bit more about how it all works "behind the scenes."

On a GREAT note, I attended a meeting of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund on Friday, and had the opportunity to speak with a group of people who were discussing and strategizing ways to get fresh, local produce into our school systems in NC. We talked about a number of successful programs across the US where schools buy direct from farms, and also about some of the challenges they faced. Do the school kitchens have the equipment to "process" whole foods? Can they cut up the carrots, the veggies, etc. Is there enough cooler space for fresh produce (not freezer space, cooler space). Do they have to talk to 30 different farmers or is there a way to consolidate that process. It was an interesting discussion and one we are excited to be a part of. As I've said MANY MANY times, we are learning together!!

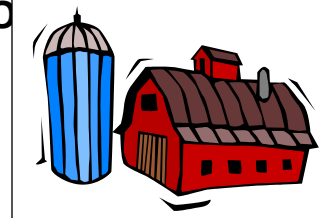
Courtney Tellefsen, Founder

When we realized how fast the *broccoli* was going – it sold in ONE HOUR!- we called Ted to double check his quantities. He walked his fields and saw the broccoli has already begun to flower in the heat.



Good news though... James Taylor (not the singer!) should have his broccoli coming off in about two weeks. Broccoli growers are few and far between in NC, but we're working on more for next year!

"LET ME TELL YOU HOW TO GET HERE"



One thing I'm realizing as we schedule farm visits with some of our new farm partners, or set up times to pick up fresh fruits or veggies, is that the directions to almost every farm is the same. It's really funny! Every time I get on the phone and get out a pencil and paper (or crayon sometimes!), it's always the same:

"Okay....so take the _____ exit and turn left" "Go down about four miles or so and you'll see a fire station" "Turn left and go over two railroad tracks" "Look for the big oak tree and turn right there on the dirt road past the pond". "Come up to the yellow/red/green barn"

And of course, it's always a beautiful farm with acres of green veggies and a really excited farmer ready to work with us. I LOVE IT!!!!

Be on the lookout for more MEMBER FARM VISITS COMING IN JUNE, by the way!

Freshness Tips

1. Line the bottom of your refrigerator's crisper drawer with paper towels. They'll absorb the excess moisture that causes vegetables to rot.
2. To keep herbs tasting fresh for up to a month, store whole bunches, washed and sealed in plastic bags, in the freezer. When you need them, they'll be easier to chop, and they'll defrost the minute they hit a hot pan.
3. A bay leaf slipped into a container of flour, pasta, or rice will help repel bugs.
4. Stop cheese from drying out by spreading butter or margarine on the cut sides to seal in moisture. This is most effective with hard cheeses sealed in wax.
5. When radishes, celery, or carrots have lost their crunch, simply pop them in a bowl of iced water along with a slice of raw potato and watch the limp vegetables freshen up right before your eyes.
6. Avoid separating bananas until you plan to eat them – they spoil less quickly in a bunch.
7. Put rice in your saltshaker to stop the salt from hardening. The rice absorbs condensation that can cause clumps.
8. Stock up on butter when it's on sale – you can store it in the freezer for up to six months. Pack the butter in an airtight container, so it doesn't take on the flavor of whatever else you're freezing.
9. In order to make cottage cheese or sour cream last longer, place the container upside down in the fridge. Inverting the tub creates a vacuum that inhibits the growth of bacteria that causes food to spoil.
10. Believe it or not, honey is the only nonperishable food substance, so don't get rid of the stuff if it crystallizes or becomes cloudy. Microwave on medium heat, in 30-second increments, to make honey clear again.
11. Prevent extra cooked pasta from hardening by stashing it in a sealed plastic bag and refrigerating. When you're ready to serve, throw the pasta in boiling water for a few seconds to heat and restore moisture.
12. Keeping brown sugar in the freezer will stop it from hardening. But if you already have hardened sugar on your shelf, soften it by sealing in a bag with a slice of bread – or by microwaving on high for 30 seconds.
13. If you only need a few drops of lemon juice, avoid cutting the lemon in half – it will dry out quickly. Instead, puncture the fruit with a metal skewer and squeeze out exactly what you require.
14. If you're unsure of an egg's freshness, see how it behaves in a cup of water: Fresh eggs sink; bad ones float.

SWEET ONIONS FOR SPRING ONIONS

We estimated to John Gross that we'd have a larger sweet onion order, and Robbie hadn't started harvesting his spring onions yet. So we talked to Robbie last night and we're going to substitute John's for his onions this week in Box C. I love to see these farmers working together to help each other out! Beautiful!

DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE OUT YOUR BOXES AND CONTAINERS EACH WEEK!!!

Remember, we need to pick up your boxes and containers on delivery day. We'll leave a note if you forget the first time to remind you, but have to charge the enrollment fee again if you forget twice. We don't need extra clamshells, though, so recycle those.

Thanks!

HITCHHIKER IN BOX!! NEIGHBORHOOD COORDINATOR LEARNS LESSSSON!

As our Clayton Coordinator, Lori, went about her day last week delivering boxes of YUMMY fresh fruits and veggies, and collecting the empty boxes left out to re-use, she learned an important lesson.

CHECK BOXES BEFORE YOU PUT THEM IN YOUR CAR!

What did she find? A SNAKE!!! He greeted when she opened the car door at the next stop. YIKES!!! Luckily, it was a harmless garden snake who enjoyed the box warming in the sun, but still.....what a surprise!

Today about 25 million kids and teens in the U.S. are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. That's nearly one in every three young people.

Fast food outlets spend \$3 billion in television ads targeted at children.

Instead of having a healthy balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods, children prefer to eat pizzas, burgers and unhealthy fast foods.

Children eat nearly twice as many calories (770) at restaurants as they do during a meal at home (420).

**Eating Local is
Good for your Kids!**

NEW! Next Week!

The Old Log Cabin Mercantile Sweet & Spicy Pecans

We first dry roast our jumbo pecan halves with chipotle peppers and spices, then coat the pecans with a delicious combination of our own locally harvested Wildflower Honey, sugar, and syrup to create a crunchy and tasty snack with a little kick at the end.

Offered in our new 10-ounce airtight and tamper-proof jar, perfect as a gift, or for snacking.



I love The Produce Box and have found a fun way to encourage my boys to eat more fruits and veggies. Here's what I do...

My food dehydrator is the hardest working electric devices in my kitchen these days. It's like the Wayne Newton of my kitchen appliances! To get my guys to eat healthy treats, I began making dried fruit salad. It's so simple, all I do is put dehydrated strawberries, pineapple, kiwi, bananas and apples into a small plastic bag and my boys pack them into their school lunches. In the past, I would put fresh fruit into a small plastic container but by lunchtime, it was all gross and mushy, they found it disgusting! Now they munch on this snack all the time.

Also, our oldest son, Nathan attends the United States Military Academy and I have sent him dehydrated fruit to substitute the less than healthy snack food readily available at West Point. He will be training this summer in blazing sun of Texas and my plan is to send him care packages of homemade trail mix and dehydrated fruit for him to enjoy. I appreciate how The Produce Box is inspiring me and allowing me to motivate my family, especially my Soldier.

Cindy Winter-Hartley, *Cary Member*

The Bread's Shop's John Toogood, on his best-selling bread:

Texas Three Seed Bread is a whole wheat bread made with Honey and Molasses, which gives this bread a touch of sweetness. We add Sunflower, Sesame and Poppy seeds into the dough late in the mix to give the bread a great nutty grainy texture and flavor. It's breakfast in one slice or try it as a great hearty sandwich bread. My favorite is a peanut butter and jam.

Texas Three Seed Bread is fantastic and addicting.

SPECIALTY ITEMS

This Week

Anna's Fresh Garden Salsa
Sweet & Tart Tomato Sauce
The Bread Shop's
Texas 3-Seed Bread



Next Week

The Old Log Cabin Mercantile
Sweet & Spicy Pecans
Great Harvest Bread Company's
Honey Whole Wheat Bread
GroWILD Granola



THE PRODUCE BOX

STORAGE & USAGE Visit www.theproducebox.com for more info!

**Eat first!*

***Blueberries-** Keep blueberries refrigerated, unwashed, in a rigid container covered with clear wrap. Water on fresh blueberries hastens deterioration, so do not wash before refrigerating. Blueberries are highly perishable so do try to use them as soon as possible

***Strawberries-** Refrigerate whole and cut berries. Mix with sugar (1:1 ratio) and pop in freezer. Use as topping for cake, ice cream, hot cereal, waffles and pancakes. Space washed whole berries on a cookie sheet and freeze for one hour. Place in zip-lock bag and store in freezer.

Red Beets- Beet greens: wrap in plastic and store for several days in the refrigerator. **Beet roots:** may be washed but should be allowed to dry before being stored. Cut off the tops two inches above the root, and refrigerate beets in plastic bags. They will keep for one to two weeks.

***Early Squash-** To store summer squash, place unwashed in plastic bags in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Wash the squash just before preparation. As with most vegetables, water droplets promote decay during storage. The storage life of summer squash is brief, so use within two to three days.

Spring or Texas Onions- Store **spring onions** in the refrigerator, loosely covered with a plastic bag. Since spring onions are fresh, they have high moisture content. Use them within a week — but that should be easy. **Texas and other mature onions-** A great method that takes up almost no space is the "nylon hose" storage system. Take the leg of a sheer (the sheerer the better) lady's nylon hose and drop in an onion all the way to the toe. Tie a knot about 2 inches above the onion. Drop in another onion and tie another knot, and repeat until the whole hose is used. The finished product will look a lot like a lumpy sausage. Hang the hose with onions in a cool, dark, dry location. When you want an onion, cut off the bottom section.

Romaine, Bibb- Wrap in paper towels and storing open plastic bag in crisper. Avoid storing lettuce with apples, pears or bananas. These fruits release ethylene gas, a natural ripening agent that will cause the lettuce to develop brown spots and decay quickly.

Cabbage- Green cabbage is sometimes called Dutch White. The outer leaves are dark green and the inner leaves are smooth and pale to medium green. If you plan to eat the cabbage raw, use within a few days. Cabbage that you plan to cook can be stored in the refrigerator for about two weeks. Or shred or chop, wash and drain well, then freeze in ziplock bags. **Cooking:** the notorious odor problem is a result of over cooking. Cabbage contains isothiocyanates that break down into smelly sulfur compounds during cooking. The reaction is even stronger in aluminum pans. The longer the cabbage is cooked the more smelly the compounds become. The solution; a brief cooking time. Cook just until tender and use stainless steel pots and pans.

Bok Choy (Pak Choy) - Wrapped in paper towels and stored in the vegetable crisper section of the refrigerator, bok choy should keep for up to a week. Boiling, steaming, stir-frying and even deep-frying are all possibilities. Separate the leaves from the stalks, as the thick stalks have a longer cooking time.

Sweet Potatoes, Orange- Store in a paper bag in a cool, dark place. Sweet potatoes will keep for several months, getting sweeter along the way. Roast them whole or chunked; with butter, cinnamon and sugar; or with olive oil, salt and herbs; use in place of white potatoes in soups, stews or hash browns; slice thick or thin for oven chips or fries, sprinkled with sweet, savory or spicy seasonings.

Tomatoes- Leave tomatoes out at room temperature until cut or cooked, then refrigerate. Dice tomatoes, sauté in olive oil, cool and pack in sealed containers; freeze for use later in soups, stews or sauces. Or make a fabulous, fresh tomato sandwich!

Cucumbers- Store in crisper or on bottom shelf of fridge. Keep wrapped until ready to use. (English only)