



www.TheProduceBox.com

What's in your Box this week:

Box A: Butternut squash, Watermelon, Peaches, Grape tomatoes, Sprite melon, Local Muscadine grapes cider, Sweet Potatoes (new 2010 crop)

Box B: Watermelon, Lee's Farm Pickled Squash, Grape tomatoes, Scuppernong grapes, Field grown okra or sweet pepper, Peaches, Butternut squash

Box C: Small share of Asian Pears, Peaches, Rest of the Box is Farmer's Choice

North to South

I grew up in the North, (Alaska that is), where snow is prevalent for 7-8 months of the year, the ground is frozen solid and the days are dark and cold. The coming of spring brings an eagerness to be outdoors and enjoy the daylight hours and midnight sun as much as you can, since you know it won't stick around nearly long enough. Growing up in this kind of environment makes it challenging to be resourceful and stick with the local fare. Gardens thrive during the short 3-4 month growing season. Vegetables can grow to enormous proportions under the midnight sun. Here are a few record breaking veggies at the Alaska State Fair: 23-foot, 3 1/2-inch corn stalk; 4.702-pound parsnip; 1,019-pound pumpkin; 17.195-pound yellow zucchini; 67 1/8-inch long gourd; and a 73.4-pound cabbage

While the summer months bring the farmer's markets, gardens and preserving possibilities, the winter months are challenging for purchasing produce locally. There were many times I remember going to the grocery store in search of good fresh fruit and/or vegetables when none was to be found, since the produce had travelled way too many miles to arrive at our destination. By the time it arrived at our stores the quality did not meet our expectations and we'd either go without or purchase something in a can.

Now, living in North Carolina, where the growing season is double what I am used to, I am more than eager to make as many local food purchases as possible. It is exciting to try new items and discover what it's possible to grow in our area. The idea of eating seasonally is appealing to me, and my family has started to make small changes in order to make this happen. Through my discoveries, I have enjoyed reading a few good books, which have helped me to make informed decisions and strengthened my resolve to purchase locally. I'd like to share them with you, as I think you'd enjoy them too:

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, by Barbara Kingsolver

Food Matters, by Mark Bittman

The Omnivore's Dilemma, by Michael Pollan

Nourishing Traditions, by Sally Fallon

Wherever you may be on your journey to purchase local food, keep these words of Michael Pollan in mind, "...imagine for a moment if we once again knew, strictly as a matter of course, these few unremarkable things: What it is we're eating. Where it came from. How it found its way to our table. And what, in a true accounting, it really cost. We could then talk about some other things at dinner. For we would no longer need any reminding that however we choose to feed ourselves, we eat by the grace of nature, not industry, and what we're eating is never anything more or less than the body of the world."

-Katie Johns, Area Manager (Cary)

IMPORTANT FALL SEASON INFO: We will take a two week delivery hiatus from September 17th until the 30th to prepare for fall deliveries. We will be "experimenting" this year to see what you think of the variety and selection of regional produce available during October and November. So as we go along, be sure to let us know if you're happy with what we're doing, or if you think it's probably time to stop for the year....and of course, when you're ready to stop, you can skip all the way until March 2011 by clicking MULTIPLE SKIPS on the site. This will reserve your space for next year as well!!

All of you will be receiving a END OF SEASON MEMBER SURVEY later this week, to help us improve, organize and prepare the fall as well as next year's Boxes.. We love hearing from you!! By the way, we plan to continue deliveries until Thanksgiving, as long as your interest, a coordinator for your neighborhood and the availability of the crops works out.

I'm excited about the veggies Joe Deal is planting for us this fall. We've also been contacted by other growers as a result of the newspaper article. It's amazing what is being grown in North Carolina!! Did you know there is a farmer in the mountains growing rice?? We should be able to include neat items like this in the fall Boxes, as well as more local cheeses and specialty products.

Here's an idea of the crops being planted now for the fall in addition to the regular "summer offerings" of cukes, tomatoes, squash: carrots, green beans, eggplant, spinach, kale, cabbage, cooking pumpkins, apples, apple cider, garlic, shitake mushrooms, local rice, and maybe kiwi fruit (!). We'll also offer several varieties of greens and hopefully fall lettuces. We even looked into local wine as an add-on...not sure if that will work, though!

A NOTE FROM COURTNEY:

Whew! It's been really hot and muggy, hasn't it? The rains have been good for the farmers, but this extended hot, dry season is taking a toll on the process of buying produce in the Piedmont in other ways. For example, tomatoes are now in short supply compared to previous seasons.... last week, we saw a 25% increase in price!!

It's the same thing with other veggies as well. Ron said they are getting calls to supply places they haven't in the past and they don't even have the tomatoes to share. Thank goodness they're committed to us!

So that's the dilemma.this fall, we might find that we can't put in as much as we promised in your Friday email. Maybe, when that happens, we should just let you all know that there will be less in the box and you can decide to skip if you'd like. On the other hand, we have all said we want to support the farms, and if we all skip when it gets lean, then it defeats the purpose

**Members- what are your thoughts? How do you feel about Box A having some Farmer's Choice items, in situations where they just aren't sure there will be enough of a certain item? EMAIL ME WITH YOUR COMMENTS:
Courtney@theproducebox.com**

Thanks in advance,

Courtney

Sweet Potato Burritos

2 sweet potatoes (medium size)

1 Tbsp Garlic

¼ c Onion minced

¼ to ½ cup water

Olive oil

Optional toppings: salsa, green onions, fresh cilantro, guacamole, cheese,

plain non-fat Greek yogurt

Wheat tortillas

Taco Seasoning: makes about 3 servings worth. Store in tightly closed container in cool, dry place and use within 6 months. 1 serving = 2 Tbsp

½ Tbsp to 1 Tbsp salt

2 Tbsp chili powder

2 tsp paprika/smoked paprika

2 tsp dried red pepper flakes

1 ½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp dried marjoram

¼ tsp black pepper

2 Tbsp cornstarch

1 tsp ground cumin

Peel & shred sweet potatoes. Sauté garlic and onion in olive oil. Add sweet potatoes and stir well. Add water to help potato cook down (and not stick – a little less or more than recipe calls for is fine). When potatoes start to cook down, add taco seasoning (~ 2 Tbsp or to taste). Cover and stir periodically for a few more minutes.

Jennifer, member in Raleigh

How do I eat these things???

Scuppernong Grapes

You can use your teeth to strain the seeds. Put the hole side of the grape up against your teeth that are just slightly open. Push the grape with your thumb, allowing the fruit to enter your mouth but leaving the seeds in the hull of the grape. It takes a little practice, but after you get it, you get it!

Patty M, member WakeMed

Thanks for the tip, Patty! ☺

I love the adventure of using up all my veggies each week. When the box arrived this week I still had my zucchini and some other items from last week, so I made minestrone soup using the zucchini, tomatoes, red potatoes, squash, and broth. I topped this with salt and pepper and some parmesan cheese and it was wonderful!

I also used last week's Poblano peppers to make pancetta-wrapped cream cheese stuffed peppers, and it was so easy! Just cut the peppers up, top with cream cheese, and wrap each piece with pancetta or bacon. Pop these in a hot oven for about 15 minutes, or until the meat is cooked. It's a crowd pleaser!

-Katrina, member from Raleigh

Hot Pepper 411

The hotter the weather, the hotter the peppers- like Poblano, jalapeno and hot banana. Peppers with brown 'cracks' are hotter-tasting than smooth green ones; red peppers will be the hottest. Protect your skin by wearing gloves when cutting peppers. (First aid gloves work great!) Reduce the heat by seeding the peppers and/or boiling peppers for 5-10 minutes before making poppers, or adding to other favorite dishes.

Warm Potato Salad (from Epicurious.com)

- 3 pound medium boiling potatoes, scrubbed
- 3 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
- 1/4 pound bacon (5 slices)
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh chives

Cover potatoes generously with cold salted in a pot and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes. Drain potatoes. When potatoes are cool enough to handle but still warm, cut into 1-inch pieces, then toss with vinegar and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a large bowl.

Cook bacon in oil in a large heavy skillet over medium-low heat, turning occasionally, until crisp. Drain bacon on paper towels, reserving fat in skillet. Add 1/4 cup of hot bacon fat to potatoes and toss. Coarsely crumble bacon on top, then add chives, and salt and pepper to taste, and toss.

*Notes: Try with a caramelized spring onion, instead of chives. Sub olive oil for the bacon fat.

Vonnie, member in Raleigh