

# Crop Spot: Eggplant

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family, making it a close relative of tomatoes, potatoes, and peppers. The large, dark purple Italian eggplant is most commonly carried in the grocery stores, but there are many other varieties that range in color from violet to green to white. Eggplant grows best in hot weather and is available at farmers markets in Michigan from July - October.



Eggplant is best stored in a loose bag in a cool place on the counter as storing it in the fridge can cause browning and change its flavor. The neutral flavor and spongy texture makes it a good substitute for meat. While eggplant is not particularly high in any vitamins or minerals, it is very low in calories and provides a healthy dose of fiber. Fiber keeps us full longer, helps regulate blood sugar, and can help lower cholesterol. Use eggplant to compliment other seasonal veggies and bulk up a mixed dish without adding extra calories.

## Grilled Eggplant

*This easy recipe is sure to please vegetarians and carnivores alike!*



- 3 large eggplants (any variety), cut into rounds
  - ½ cup olive oil
  - ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
  - 1 tsp oregano, dried or fresh
  - ½ tsp thyme, dried or fresh
  - ½ tsp Red pepper flakes
  - ½ tsp honey
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - Salt and pepper
  - ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
  - 3 tbsp chopped basil or parsley
1. In a container big enough to fit the eggplant, mix together the olive oil, vinegar, herbs, garlic, honey, salt and pepper and adjust to taste.
  2. Add the cut eggplant and marinate in the fridge for at least 1 hour.
  3. Preheat the grill to high. Put the eggplant on the grill, then lower the heat to medium. Brown on both sides, about 5 minutes on each side.
  4. Remove from grill and top with feta cheese and chopped basil or parsley. Serve with tahini sauce or yogurt sauce.

# Crop Spot: Dark Leafy Greens

The dark leafy greens are a group of nutritional powerhouse veggies like kale, Swiss chard, arugula, spinach, mustard greens and more! They are full of a wide variety of vitamins (A, C, E, and K), minerals (magnesium, iron, calcium) and are a great source of fiber.

These veggies typically grow best in cooler spring and fall months but can be found at Michigan farmers markets year round.

In the kitchen, dark leafy greens are some of the most versatile vegetables around. Tender baby greens make great salads, fabulous additions to smoothies, and interesting toppings for tacos, burgers, pizza and sandwiches. Larger leaves can be eaten raw in “massaged” salads, shredded into slaws, or used as wraps for sandwich filling. Cooking larger leaves in stir fries, as a stand alone dish, wilted in salads, or mixed into eggs also is a great way to add flavor and nutrition to your meals.



## Curried Chickpea Wraps

*This recipe is a surprise favorite of kids and picky adults!*



- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 15-ounce cans (1 1/2 cups) chickpeas, drained
- 1 medium stalk celery, diced
- 1/2 large bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium carrot, grated
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 Tb curry powder
- 8 collard leaves (may substitute kale or swiss chard)

1. Mash avocado and chickpeas together until the consistency of egg salad. Add remaining ingredients (except collards) and stir well.
2. Prepare collard greens by trimming the stems and cutting out the center rib. of the stem to be flush with the rest of the leaf. Place trimmed leaves in a large saucepan of boiling water for 30 seconds. Immediately transfer to an ice bath.
3. Assemble the wraps by adding 1/4 c of the chickpea mixture to the center of the collard leaves. Roll up like a burrito and enjoy!.

# Crop Spot: Radish

An edible root vegetable of the Brassicaceae family (it's cousins are broccoli, kale, collards, and cabbage), radishes come in a variety of colors and shapes. The most common radishes are red and round but they can be purple, white, pink or multi colored. Radish like cooler weather and are usually available in spring and fall at Michigan farmers markets. Choose radishes that are firm and whose leaves are bright green.



Store radishes in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. For longer storage, remove the greens, but don't throw them away! Wash and add them to stir fry, saute with garlic and onions (finish with a splash of lemon), or puree into a spicy radish leaf pesto.

Most people eat radishes raw, sliced as a garnish for tacos, raw and splashed with vinegar or dipped into hummus or another favorite dip.

## Roasted Garlic Radishes

*A unique recipe for a tasty, quick weeknight vegetable*



- 1 lb. radishes, ends trimmed and halved
- 1 Tbsp. melted ghee or butter
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 tsp. dried parsley, dried chives or dried dill

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. In a bowl, combine the radishes, melted ghee or butter, salt and pepper and toss until radishes are evenly coated.
3. Spread radishes out in a large 9×13 inch baking dish. Don't over crowd. Bake for 20-25 minutes, tossing every 10 or so minutes.
4. Add minced garlic and dried parsley and bake for an additional 5 minutes or until radishes are golden brown and cooked through.



# Crop Spot: Parsnip

A cousin of the carrot, parsnips are a long, tapered tan root vegetable available at Michigan farmers markets September through March. They have a mildy sweet flavor, are crunchy when raw, and have many healthy nutrients. They are full of fiber (keeps you full), vitamin C (skin health, immune health, wound healing), manganese (cholesterol balance) and folate (healthy pregnancies) and low in calories.



Parsnips are versatile in the kitchen and easy to incorporate into meals! They pair well with roast chicken or beef and are a tasty side dish when roasted on their own. Combining boiled parsnips and potatoes or rutabaga makes a sweet vegetable side dish and pureed parsnips and horseradish make a tasty meat topping. Regardless of the dish you're making, prepare large parsnips by removing the core, which may be a bit woody.

## Parsnip Fries

*A fun take on tradition french fries*



- 3-4 large parsnips
- 3 Tb Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp turmeric
- Ketchup, for dipping

1. Preheat your oven to 400F.
2. Scrub your parsnips clean and lightly peel. Slice into thin even pieces and toss in a small bowl with olive oil.
3. Add salt, garlic and turmeric. Stir to combine and then transfer parsnips to a baking sheet.
4. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove and flip parsnips with spatula.
5. Bake for another 10-15 minutes, or until parsnips are golden brown.
6. Remove from oven and serve immediately!