



*** Our enhanced logo is now a link to our Newsletter Archives ***

I have a shocking announcement for you today. Really Fresh, Really Local vegetables are not the only reason that Plant It Forward exists!

I hope isn't a surprise for many of you. Now, I love the vegetables and they have changed my diet, my health, and the way I see the world (food deserts, distribution channels, dirt). But I signed on to the program 4 years ago because the idea that my personal eating could make a specific, noticeable difference in the lives of some people that really needed it, was electrifying to me.

So how do you factor into this. Well, Plant It Forward was inspired to help Houston refugees make a sustainable living wage* using the skills and passions that they brought with them. This was the Why. The Who, the What and the How was still unknown. After extensive conversations with Catholic Charities, the Congolese refugee community was identified as a group that needed a path for their energies and skills to enable them to contribute to the economic growth of their families and community. With the training and support provided by our member and community, 10 refugees are now tax-paying entrepreneurs.

**A living wage is calculated at \$25,500 a year. Think about that. \$12.25 an hour. It's not much, but it's enough to live on. 30 Farm Shares for 52 weeks will give a farmer a living wage.*

This week I wanted to share the energy I get when I go to market, or visit the farm, or check out the abundant vegetables for the newsletter. All 10 farmers, working hard, with their families, with people from their community to build their business. The vegetables that I eat every week have made a difference in my life and I'm making a difference in someone else's life. And that's what I call an electrifying win-win.

Some final facts and thoughts from others....

.....Harris County alone welcomes about 30 of every 1,000 refugees that the U.N. resettles anywhere in the world — more than any other American city, and more than most other nations. If Houston were a country, it would rank fourth in the world for refugee resettlement.

Houston Chronicle, City of Refugees: How Houston became a resettlement magnet, Andrew Kragie, August 31, 2015

[Adapting changes to the refugee resettlement process,] more efficiently facilitating refugees' capacities will not only speed economic integration, but could simultaneously improve organization response, eliminate state aid dependency, foster economic growth and development, fill the long-term needs of today's workforces and create a more welcoming and empowering environment for newcomers.

(Moving into the Fastlane, Understanding Refugee Upward Mobility in the Context of Resettlement, Dr. Faith Nibbs, The Forced Migration Upward Mobility Project, April 2016)

Plant It Forward prides itself in delivering the freshest produce in Houston. If you are ever not satisfied with the quality of your produce, Plant It Forward will replace it with the same or a comparable vegetable for free.

Your abundant vegetables this week are Cherry Tomatoes,
Sweet Peppers, Green Peppers, Carrots, Eggplant

RECIPES

Grilled Sesame Chicken and Eggplant Salad

For the marinade

- 4 boneless skin-on chicken breasts, about 8 ounces each
- Salt and pepper
- 2 large eggplants, about 2 pounds
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 1 tablespoon grated garlic
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons roasted peanut oil
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons rice wine
- ½ teaspoon Chinese chile paste or 1/4 teaspoon cayenne



For the vinaigrette and garnish

- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
 - 1 teaspoon grated ginger
 - 1 teaspoon brown sugar
 - 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
 - 1 teaspoon sesame oil
 - 3 tablespoons roasted peanut oil
 - ½ teaspoon kosher salt
 - 1 tablespoon lime juice
 - Bibb or Romaine lettuce leaves
 - 1 pound small cucumbers, peeled and cut in 1/4-inch slices
 - ½ cup thinly sliced scallions
 - ¾ cup cilantro, leaves and tender stems, roughly chopped
 - 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
 - 1 jalapeño, green or red, thinly sliced, optional
 - Lime wedges
1. Remove the tenderloins from the underside of the chicken breasts and reserve for another purpose. Trim breasts if necessary and flatten them slightly with a meat mallet. Season on both sides with salt and pepper and place in a shallow dish. Using a clean knife and cutting board, peel eggplant and cut into 1/2-inch slices, then season with salt and pepper. Place eggplant slices in a separate shallow dish.

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2. Prepare the marinade: stir together ginger, garlic, soy sauce, peanut oil, sesame oil, rice wine and chile paste in a small bowl. Pour half the marinade over chicken and remaining marinade over eggplant, turning over to coat well. Leave at room temperature for 30 minutes. (You may do this step up to 2 hours ahead and refrigerate. Return to room temperature before cooking.)
3. Make the vinaigrette: whisk together rice vinegar, ginger, brown sugar, mustard, sesame oil, peanut oil, salt and lime juice. Set aside.
4. Heat a stovetop grill pan over medium-high heat, or use a charcoal or gas grill. Grill eggplant slices until nicely browned and softened, about 3 minutes per side. Remove and hold at room temperature. Lay chicken breasts on the grill skin side down and let cook until nicely browned, about 5 minutes. Turn and cook on the other side until firm to the touch, about 2 minutes more. Remove breasts to a platter and let rest 5 minutes.
5. Line a large platter with lettuce leaves. Cut chicken into 1/4-inch slices and arrange over lettuce. Arrange grilled eggplant around the platter. Lightly salt cucumbers and dress with 1 tablespoon vinaigrette, then scatter over salad. Spoon the rest of the vinaigrette evenly over salad. Top with scallions and cilantro, and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Garnish with optional jalapeño slices and lime wedges and serve.

[Beet and Berry Smoothie \(raw, vegan, gluten free, soy free\)](#)

1 medium beet, steamed, roasted, or raw (if you don't have a high speed blender, use steamed or roasted)
 1 cup fresh or frozen mixed berries
 1/2 cup fresh orange, sectioned or 1/2 apple seeded, unpeeled
 3/4 cup [homemade almond milk](#) or 3/4 cup commercial almond milk and 1 tbsp hempseed

Blend all ingredients together, and serve with orange sections for color

[Green Monster Spinach Smoothie](#)

- 1 frozen sliced banana
- 1 Tablespoon peanut butter
- 1/2 cup 0% Vanilla Chobani Greek yogurt
- 1 cup Unsweetened Vanilla Almond Breeze (or other kind of milk)
- 4 cups baby spinach (or more, or less) – or any green in your share – I've used Chard, Collards and Kale

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.

Optional for both smoothies

- stevia or dates to increase sweetness
- hemp, rice, or pea protein for a protein boost
- greens
- added nut butter/seeds for extra fat
- ginger

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