

East Bay Express



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MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 2011

North Oakland's Phat Beets to Launch CSA Box

FOOD [Nate Seltenrich](#) — Mon, Jan 3, 2011 at 11:24 AM

Coming soon to a stoop near you: The Beet Box. Continuing its mission of getting healthy food to members of disadvantaged and low-income communities, North Oakland-based **Phat Beets Produce** has announced a new Community Support Agriculture (CSA) box distribution system that will rely upon residential drop points to reach neighborhoods not served by farmers' markets. The weekly boxes will feature organic and pesticide-free fruits and vegetables grown by small farmers in Monterey County and Fresno and will cost \$24 for a full share (eleven to fourteen items) or \$12 for a half share.

"It's gonna be seasonable, and we're going to mix it up by bringing in mushrooms and dates" and other unexpected options, said Phat Beets Food System Coordinator **Max Cadji**. Standard fare will include a starch (likely a potato); onion, garlic, or leeks; a root crop; and seasonal fruit. Phat Beets is working with a Salinas-based small-farmer incubation program called **ALBA** (Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association) that includes members both in the Central Valley and on the coast, so they'll have access to leafy greens all year. One member grows greenhouse tomatoes nearly year-round. Others in the valley produce strawberries nine months of the year.

"We're basically starting this program specifically to support our farmers," said Cadji. "In the long run, we want to make this an economically viable CSA." But it also provides an important community asset. Participants can elect to pick up their boxes weekly at five Oakland and Berkeley locations, only one of which is a farmers' market. As more people sign up, said Cadji, Phat Beets will look to add additional drop spots in high-demand residential areas throughout the Bay Area. They've already got a call out for volunteers to offer up their front yards.

This means that people who are unable to travel to farmers' markets will potentially get access to fresh, seasonal, and pesticide-free produce without leaving their neighborhood. So-called food justice is a popular cause in the Bay Area these days, but not so popular that there's not enough room for another player. The first boxes go out on Saturday, January 8. **Sign up by January 5** to be eligible for the first week.

Tags: [farmers' markets](#), [seasonal](#), [local](#), [organic](#), [Phat Beets Produce](#), [food justice](#)

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COMMENTS (0)

92510

- Art** (150)
- Books** (53)
- Breaking News** (74)
- Business** (987)
- Education** (382)
- Environment** (356)
- Fashion** (74)
- Food** (210)
- Health & Medicine** (184)
- Law Enforcement & Crime** (843)
- Media** (379)
- Movies** (8)
- People** (900)
- Politics** (1715)
- Religion** (49)
- Science & Technology** (147)
- Social Services** (75)
- Sports** (386)
- Transportation** (250)

EAR BUD

- Art** (15)
- Bay Area Bands** (795)
- Breaking News** (270)
- Business** (51)
- Just-Announced Shows** (163)
- Law Enforcement & Crime** (9)
- Local Show Reviews** (79)
- Media** (12)
- Movies** (5)
- MP3s and Song Samples** (110)
- Noise Pop Music Festival** (13)
- People** (7)
- Pics and Video** (171)
- Podcasts** (8)
- Radio Express** (7)

LEGALIZATION NATION

- Books** (1)
- Cannabis Culture** (61)
- Growing & Eradication** (10)
- Health & Medicine** (19)
- Law Enforcement & Crime** (65)
- Legalization** (53)
- Regulation & Legislation** (47)

WE MADE IT UP

- Novels** (89)
- Skip Tracer** (65)

VIEWED	E-MAILED	COMMENTED	VIDEOS
Monday Must Read: San Jose Moves Forward on A's Ballpark; Jerry Brown's Sacramento Loft Built with Redevelopment Funds			
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2010

OTHER YEARS

Intro	2009
Readers' Poll Winners	2008
Arts & Culture	2007
Goods & Services	2006
People & Places	2005
Restaurants & Bars	2004
Sports & Leisure	2003
Categories We Didn't Think Of	2002
Readers Say The Darndest Things	2001