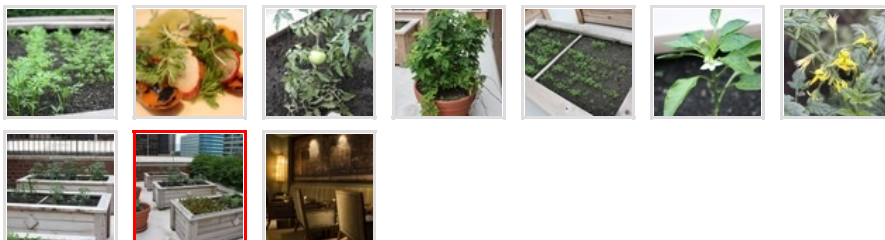





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## Markethouse Garden Serves Up Freshness All Summer



Chef Scott Walton, of [Markethouse](#) restaurant, loves his garden. While restaurant gardens are becoming a bit more common of late, it's easy to tell the gardens that are publicity stunts apart from the gardens that are labors of love. Walton can talk about plants, fertilizers and raised beds as easily as he can talk about savory and sweet in the kitchen, and he's gotten his crew into the act, sending them to nurseries and plant stores looking for exotic flavors. On the day we visited, he was on the phone with one of his chefs at a nursery looking for a Quince tree, and debating the merits of figs (wrong climate) vs olives (takes too long to grow).


If you believe that a small rooftop garden doesn't produce very much, think again. Last year, Walton used 6 large boxes to grow his crops - now he's up to 14, and there are standing pots in between most of the boxes. Once crops start coming in the fall, they harvest plenty of food. "We pickle a lot of it, because we can't use it all up," said Walton. The local ingredients fit perfectly with Markethouse's fresh, contemporary American flavors, which have received [many accolades](#) from local critics.

What can you grow in a rooftop garden? Just about everything. Carrots, beans, tons of tomatoes, herbs, beets, raspberries... and every bed presents a new potential special to the creative chef. Even in the early summer, before most of the crops ripen, a salad accented with fresh carrot tops appeared on the menu, and every last one was from the garden. Some great new dishes were just announced [today](#) that showcase the ingredients from the garden. Try a chocolate mint maitre or a pineapple maitre, both with herbs from the garden.

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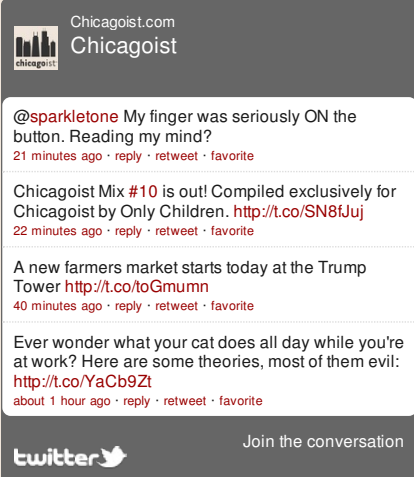
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from the garden. Try a chocolate mint mojito or a pineapple mojito, both with herbs from the garden.

Walton started many of the seeds in his own home, and seemed genuinely depressed when talking about a storm that destroyed many of the plants earlier this year. All of his beans were snapped off, though most of them have recovered and are now climbing their way up the walls. Rooftop gardening, especially on the wind-swept 5th floor of a River North high-rise, brings its own challenges - in one unplanted bed, Walton showed us how the soil itself had been swept and blown into huge, undulating waves. The garden has a bit of shelter, but hope (and a lot of tomato cages) keeps the plants from being blown all the way out to the West Side.

No matter what the challenges, Walton is committed to continuing his garden project. The next move - get the raspberries into a large, permanent planter and out of pots, which are spilling over with budding fruit. Add in the trees, and a few more beds next year, and the chef will have a farm on his hands! Which is, after all, the point - the fresher the ingredients, the better the food.

*Markethouse is located at 611 N Fairbanks Court and is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you're visiting the River East AMC, the purchase of any Markethouse entree will get you a discount on your tickets, so stop in before your next movie night.*

Contact the [author](#) of this article or email [tips@chicagoist.com](mailto:tips@chicagoist.com) with further questions, comments or tips.

By [Anthony Todd](#) in [Food](#) on June 30, 2011 11:30 AM



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