



Fruit and Vegetable Selection and Storage Tips

Fruits and vegetables have many important vitamins and minerals. Fresh produce also provides our bodies with fiber. We need 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily for our bodies to be healthy. A serving is: 1 medium whole fruit, ½ cup chopped or sliced fruit or vegetable, 1 cup leafy vegetable (such as spinach or lettuce), ¾ cup (6 ounces) fruit or vegetable juice.

Selecting good quality produce and storing it properly insures that we will get the most nutrients from the vegetables and fruits possible. As a general rule, **do not** wash or cut produce before storage. This helps the produce last longer and retain more nutrients. Of course, **always** wash fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking.

For nutritional information and more about storage and selections go to www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

Fruit/Vegetable	Selection	Storage
Apples	Firm, intense, color, no cuts, punctures or bruises on the skin	Refrigerate for 2 to 4 weeks
Avocado	Firm, no spots, ripe avocado will yield to gentle pressure	Unripe, store in paper bag. When ripe refrigerate for 3 to 5 days
Bananas	Plump, with stem attached, no bruises	Best at room temperature. To ripen green bananas quickly – place in a clean paper bag until desired ripeness is reached. If refrigerated, the skin will turn black but the flesh will remain good to eat. Can be frozen to use in smoothies or banana bread
Berries	Firm, plump berries without mold	Refrigerate in a covered, ventilated container. Do not wash until just before using.

Cantaloupe	At least 5 inches in diameter with no dents or flattened sides, net – like texture on skin, stem end should be completely smooth, circular with no ragged edges	Leave at room temperature for 2 to 4 days until yellow, fragrant, and feels springy if you press it between your palms. Store ripe cantaloupe in the refrigerator in a sealed plastic bag (to prevent absorption of odors) for up to 10 days. Cut cantaloupe must be refrigerated and will last 1 to 2 days
Cherries	Intense color, clean, firm, plump, no cuts, puncture, bruises, buy with stem attached	Refrigerate for 2 to 4 days, keep away from food with strong odors
Grapes	Look for clean, firm, plump, no cuts punctures, bruises, buy with stem attached	Will last 3 to 5 days in refrigerator. Wash just before eating
Grapefruit	Round, heavy for size, no bruises, soft spots, mold	Refrigerate for up to 2 weeks
Guavas		Refrigerate 1 to 2 days
Honeydew melon	Slight velvety texture to skin, yellowish-white or cream color, slightly springy stem end	Room temperature for 2 to 4 days if not fully ripe, refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to 1 week
Kiwifruit	Plump, firm but not hard, no shriveling, soft spots or mold on the skin, a ripe kiwi is soft but not spongy	Room temperature until completely ripe. Store ripe kiwi in the refrigerator for up to 1 week
Lemons/limes	Plump, heavy for size, no bruises, intense color	Store in refrigerator for 2 weeks
Mangos	Yellow orange, smooth, free of bruises, solid, not too soft	Store on counter for 3 to 5 days. Refrigerate for 1 week.
Papayas	Greenish yellow to full yellow in color, flesh gives slightly when fruit pressed in palm of hand	Store on counter for 3 to 5 days. Refrigerate for 1 week.
Peaches, Apricots, Nectarines, Plums	Soft to touch without being bruised, shriveled or overripe	Keep at room temperatures until ripe, then refrigerate 3 to 5 days
Pears	Firm, well colored, clear skinned, not wrinkled or overly soft	Store at room temperature until the sides yields to a little pressure (1 to 4 days) Store for 3 to 5 days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator
Rhubarb	Fresh, firm stems with a bright, glossy appearance, tender not fibrous	Store in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days, can be frozen for up to 12 months

Strawberries	Deep red, plump and moist looking, not shriveled or ones with dry browning caps. Should be firm, not bruised or leaking juice	Sort through berries and remove any damaged or moldy fruit, refrigerate with caps, covered with plastic wrap for 3 to 5 days. Wash just before using
Watermelon	Deep colored rind, well rounded, firm but not hard, yellowish underside	Room temperature for 2 to 3 days. Refrigerate for up to a week. Cut melon must be refrigerated, and will last 3 to 4 days
Artichokes	plump, globular artichokes that are heavy for their size, compact with thick, green, fresh-looking scales	Store on counter for 1 to 2 days, refrigerate 1 to 2 weeks.
Asparagus	Closed, compact tips; smooth round spears, fresh appearance, rich green color on most of the spear.	Refrigerate for 3 to 4 days.
Beans	Fresh, bright color, young, tender beans with firm, crisp pods	Refrigerate for 4 to 5 days.
Beets	Should have a least ½ inch of stems, root tip should be at least 2 inches long, should be clean and free of cuts and soft spots, stems should not be wilted	Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 7 to 10 days
Broccoli	Rich green (yellowing means it is getting old) firm, tight buds. Any leaves should be bright and not wilted. Young, tender broccoli has slender stalks.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3 to 5 days
Cabbage	Firmly packed head, heavy for its size, fresh crisp leaves with no signs of decay.	Refrigerate in plastic bag for 1 to 2 weeks, do not slice or shred before storing
Carrots	Firm, well shaped with no cracks, thin hairy, rootlets are a sign of age	Leave prepackaged carrots in their bag and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks. Store separate from apples or carrots will take on a bitter taste

Cauliflower	Dense, firmly packed florets, greenery attached to head should be green and crisp. Brown areas on florets are not desirable but a bit can be trimmed off	Cover loosely and store in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for 4 to 7 days
Celery	Green leaves ribs should be rigid and crisp with no brown, pith spots	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to 2 weeks
Corn	Husk should be green and pliant, silk should be golden not brown, stem should be flexible. Kernels should be tightly packed in even rows, plump and juicy. If the tip of the ear has no kernels, it has been picked too soon.	Fresh corn is best when cooked the day it is purchased and kept in the refrigerator until cooking time.
Cucumbers	Good green color, firm over entire length	Refrigerate for 4 to 5 days.
Jicama	Firm, unblemished skin	Refrigerate up to 1 week
Mushrooms	Color should be bright and even, cap smooth. Avoid mushrooms that are nicked and bruised and very dirty or shriveled.	Refrigerate in a paper bag or paper tray. Do not use plastic. Cover loosely with a damp paper towel. Should keep for 2 to 3 days
Onions	The neck should be tightly closed and dry. Onion should be firm, with bright, shiny skin, without soft spots or black powdery patches just under the skin. Onions with green areas have been stored under too much light and will not taste good	Store in a cool, dry spot with air circulating around them. Dry onions should last 2 to 3 weeks in the pantry. Do not store onions and potatoes next to each other, they will spoil more quickly. Onions freeze well but the texture changes with freezing so frozen onions are best used in cooking.
Peppers	Deep, characteristic color, glossy stem, relatively heavy weight, firm	Peppers freeze well but the texture changes so frozen peppers are best used for cooking. Refrigerate for 4 to 5 days.

Potatoes	Potatoes should be smooth without bumps and indentations. They should be firm with tight fitting skin, no breaks or bruises. Blackened eyes on the potato means it was frozen and green skin means it will taste bitter and is not safe to eat.	Store potatoes in the dark, light contribute to greening. Potatoes prefer a cool environment like a cellar. Refrigerating is not suggested because the starch will turn to sugar, changing the flavor. Potatoes keep for 3 to 5 weeks.
Sweet potatoes	Firm, with smooth, bright, uniformly colored skins, no signs of decay	Store in cool, dark place for 3 to 5 weeks
Summer squash	Tender and well developed, firm and fresh appearing, glossy skin means it is tender.	Store in refrigerator for 4 to 5 days.
Spinach	Leaves should have a deep, green color. Look for crisp leaves; do not buy spinach with signs of yellowing, wilting or slime. Old spinach has leathery leaves. There may be some dirt on the leaves but select bunches with as little as possible.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 2 to 3 days. Wash and cut just before using.
Tomatoes	Buy a tomato that is heavy for its size, smooth and round. The skin should have no cracks, bruises or mold. Ripe tomatoes should be soft and yield to the touch but not squishy.	Keep at room temperature until they are nearly overripe to enjoy a sweet, juicy tomato. If you must keep the tomato longer you can refrigerate it but be sure to remove it from the refrigerator about 1 hour before using for best flavor.
Winter squash	Hard, tough rind, heavy for its size.	Store on the counter for up to 1 week, for longer storage, refrigerate for 2 weeks

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