

Storing Produce for the short-term

Storing fresh fruits and vegetables correctly will help preserve health benefits as well as quality. How long fresh fruits and vegetables will maintain their quality depends on how they are stored. Extreme temperatures and too much or too little moisture cause fresh fruits and vegetables to deteriorate more rapidly.

In the Refrigerator

Use all refrigerated fruits and vegetables within a few days since longer storage results in loss of freshness and flavor.

Produce is often stored in the produce drawers of the refrigerator because you can better control the humidity. Preventing water loss from your produce will improve shelf life.

Keep fruits and vegetables in the produce drawers of your refrigerator. Berries will last longer if they are not washed before refrigeration.

Vegetables such as asparagus, greens, bok choy, celery and chard can be wrapped in damp towels to help retain moisture.

Some fruits produce ethylene gas to help them ripen. Store your fruits and vegetables separately so that vegetables retain freshness.

Some vegetables (bell peppers, hot peppers, cucumbers, ripe melons, snap beans, summer squash) are susceptible to chilling injury. Use within a few days.



Store These in the Refrigerator

Fruits

Apples
(if more than a week)
Apricots

Asian pears
Blackberries
Blueberries

Cherries
Cut fruits
Figs

Grapes
Raspberries
Strawberries

Vegetables

Artichokes
Asparagus
Green beans
Lima beans
Beets

Belgian endive
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots

Cauliflower
Celery
Cut vegetables
Cucumbers
(or on counter)

Green onions
Herbs (not basil)
Leafy vegetables
Leeks

Lettuce
Mushrooms
Peas
Radishes
Spinach

Sprouts
Summer squashes
Sweet corn

On the counter

Some fruits and vegetables should be stored at room temperature because refrigerator temperatures can prevent ripening or cause changes in texture and flavor. Bananas turn brown, tomatoes do not ripen and sweet potatoes develop a hard core when refrigerated.

Store produce on the counter for a few days in a spot away from direct sunlight to avoid too much heat.

A vented plastic bowl or plastic bag with holes can be used to help retain moisture, but avoid using sealed plastic bags because they may slow ripening or increase odors and decay.



Let these fruits ripen on the counter and then refrigerate

Avocados
Kiwi

Nectarines
Peaches

Pears
Plums

Plumcots

Store these on the counter

Fruits

Apples
(if less than 7 days)
Bananas
Cantaloupe
Grapefruit
Lemons

Limes
Mandarins
Mangoes
Oranges
Papayas

Persimmons
Pineapple
Plantain
Pomegranates
Watermelons

Vegetables

Basil (in water)
Cucumbers
(or in the refrigerator for
1-3 days)
Eggplant
Ginger

Jicama
Peppers
Pumpkins
Tomatoes
Winter squashes

In a dark, dry place

Store these in a dry place, away from direct sunlight:

Vegetables

Dry onions
Garlic
Potatoes
Sweet potatoes

These should keep for a month or more in a kitchen pantry or cabinet. Potatoes will keep 4-7 months in basements or cellars when the temperature is 40-60 F. Keep Irish potatoes away from direct light to prevent greening. Garlic and onions will keep 1-8 months at temperatures around 32 F.

Sources:

Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Better Taste, UC Davis, Post Harvest Technology, Publication #21590, 2012

Storage for the Fresh Produce, UT Extension, Enhancing the Safety of Locally Grown Produce: Storage of Fresh Produce SP 768-F



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