

# Managing Your Fresh Produce



## Choose Wisely

One way you can avoid having your produce go bad quickly is to buy it carefully in the first place. Try these tips:

- Don't buy fruits or vegetables that are already bruised or damaged.
- If you buy fruit that's already cut, choose ones that are on ice or refrigerated.
- When packing up fresh fruit and veggies, keep them away from raw meat or seafood.

## Make Them Last

The best way to store your produce depends on the type and how ripe it is to start with. Some fruits and veggies should go right into the refrigerator. You should leave others on the counter or in a fruit bowl, at least for a while. If you know how best to keep each item, they'll last longer and taste better too.



## Apples

If you plan to eat your apples quickly, it's OK to keep them on the counter up to a week. But, they'll last a lot longer (4 to 6 weeks) in the fridge. Apples give off ethylene gas, which makes other produce ripen faster. So, it's best to keep apples away from your other fruits and veggies unless you want them to get ripe fast



## Berries

Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and other berries are fragile and don't keep fresh for long no matter what you do. Don't wash them until it's time to eat. Keep them dry in a container in the refrigerator. Fresh raspberries and strawberries only keep 2 to 3 days even in the fridge. Blueberries can keep for 1 or 2 weeks. If you want to keep your fresh berries longer, you can freeze them for up to a year.



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## Bananas

If bananas are green or not yet ripe enough to eat, keep them on the counter or on a banana hanger. Don't put them in the fridge. Once they ripen, you can keep them for 3 days in the refrigerator, but the skin will turn black.



## Citrus

Citrus fruits, including lemons, limes, oranges, and grapefruit, can keep for a while on the counter. But they'll last a lot longer -- up to 3 weeks -- in the fridge. Keep them loose in the crisper drawer or in a mesh bag.



## Tomatoes

Tomatoes will keep until they are tender, ripe, and ready to eat. Once ripe, they'll last for another week on the counter or in the pantry away from sun or heat. You shouldn't put tomatoes in the fridge. It changes the way



they taste and makes them go bad faster. But one exception to that rule: put tomatoes in the fridge if you've cut them.

## Broccoli and Cauliflower

Broccoli, broccoli raab (rapini), and cauliflower will keep in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days. It's best to put them in a drawer away from other produce.



## Leafy Greens

You should keep lettuce and other leafy greens such as kale, spinach, or collards in the refrigerator. Lettuce should keep for a week or two. Spinach won't last for more than a week. Other greens will stay fresh for up to 4 days in the refrigerator. If your greens were pre-packaged or bagged, they'll keep for less time -- about 3 to 5 days. Don't hang on to bagged greens for more than 2 days after opening them.



## Squash

Summer squash and zucchini will stay fresh up to 5 days in the refrigerator. Winter squashes, such as butternut or acorn squash, can keep for a lot longer. They'll last up



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## Avocados

You don't want to eat avocados that are hard. Ripe avocados will feel soft, but not mushy. Keep hard avocados on the counter to let them ripen at room temperature. Once they're ripe, you can keep them fresh a little longer by putting them in the fridge. A ripe avocado will keep for 3 to 4 days when stored in the refrigerator.



## Root Vegetables

Put root vegetables like carrots, parsnips, radishes, turnips, and beets in the refrigerator. Carrots and parsnips will stay fresh in the fridge for up to 3 weeks. Radishes, turnips, and beets will last about 2 weeks. Instead of the fridge, it's best to keep potatoes and sweet potatoes in the pantry or a cool, dark place. Potatoes that you store in the fridge may darken when you cook them and taste sweet.



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## Food Safety Practices

If your produce picks are delicate and easily spoiled -- think berries, mushrooms, and lettuce -- they go straight to the fridge. The same for anything pre-cut or peeled, as well as what you chop or prepare once you are home. Two hours is the longest time that sliced fruits and veggies should be left on the counter or serving tray.



Your refrigerator should be cold enough to keep bacteria -- which grow most quickly between 40 and 140 F -- at bay. To check the temp, place a glass kitchen thermometer in a glass of water. Set it in the middle of the fridge and leave it for 5 to 8 hours. Meanwhile, your freezer should stay a nice round 0 F.

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