

HOME STORAGE GUIDE FOR FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Properly and safely storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables at home is important for many reasons including:

- to maintain the integrity of the product
- to further ripen some fruit
- to prevent spoilage
- to prevent illness
- to get the best value for your purchasing dollar

Improper storage of some whole fresh fruits and vegetables may cause deterioration of both their flavour and nutrition profile.

How to Ripen Fruits and Vegetables

Some fruits do not ripen once harvested and are ready to eat and enjoy when you buy them while others will continue to ripen after harvest, because they naturally produce a gas called ethylene, (e.g. apple, tomatoes, ripe banana). Ethylene triggers the ripening process; exposure to this ethylene also causes vegetable deterioration, therefore fruits and vegetables should be stored separately in the refrigerator.

It's easy to ripen fruit at home by following these simple steps:

1. Place fruit in paper bag. Loosely close the bag.
2. Leave at room temperature but away from direct sunlight.
3. Fruits ripen at different rates depending on the type of fruit and the temperature of the room. Check on the fruit every day to ensure the best possible ripeness and consult the table below for more information about timelines, etc.
4. To check ripeness, place fruit in the palm of your hand and squeeze gently. If the fruit responds to light pressure and smells slightly sweet, it's ready to eat! If it's not ready, leave it in the bag and check again each day until ripe.

Tips:

1. Hasten the ripening process by adding a ripe banana or an apple to the bag.
2. Once the fruit is ripe, eat it right away for maximum flavour, aroma and texture, or it may be stored refrigerated for a short time according to the information provided in the table below.
Important: Use only paper bags to ripen fruit, since plastic bags and containers trap moisture and air that will lead to spoilage. Remember to store ethylene producing fruit separately.

Some vegetables can be stored for several months if certain criteria are met. The ideal cold storage room must be dry, dark and cool (7 – 10 °C). Basements, garages and cupboards in today's homes are often not equipped to meet these three conditions, so plan your storage wisely. Storing large quantities of potatoes, onions, squash and rutabagas will not be economical if spoilage occurs.

Once fruits and vegetables have been cut, they should be used promptly or covered tightly and refrigerated for no more than two or three days. If cut produce is left at room temperature for longer than 2 hours it should be discarded.

Protect Your Produce Dollar

To get the best value from your fruit and vegetable dollar, follow suggested storage times, temperatures and special tips. Whole fruits and vegetables may be stored longer than the times indicated but their flavour and nutrition will deteriorate. Once cut, cover tightly, refrigerate and use as soon as possible.

Washing Fruits and Vegetables

With the exception of leafy greens, fresh fruits and vegetables have a natural protective coating and should not be washed before storing as washing will hasten deterioration.

1. Wash fruits and vegetables under clean, cool, running water just before you prepare or eat them, even if you intend to remove the skin/peel.
2. Use clean cutting boards and utensils when preparing produce.

Leafy greens such as iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, green & red leaf lettuce and spinach will keep fresher if washed before storage. Follow these easy steps.

1. Wash with clean, cool running water.
2. Discard wilted, discolored or blemished leaves.
3. Carefully dry in salad spinner or on clean paper towels.
4. Store in salad spinner or wrap lettuce loosely in clean paper towels and store in sealed plastic bag or container.
5. Use within 1 week.

Tips:

1. Lettuce turns pinkish-brown due to oxidation (being cut and exposed to oxygen) or when exposed to ethylene. Discard any brown ends or leaves.
2. Lettuce and spinach purchased in airtight packages should be refrigerated "as is" and washed when opened for use.

Take a look at CPMA's [FRUIT STORAGE GUIDE](#) and [VEGETABLE STORAGE GUIDE](#) for more detailed information about how to store your favourite fruits and vegetables.

FRUIT STORAGE GUIDE

FRUIT	ROOM TEMP STORAGE (20-20°C/68-72°F)	REFRIGERATED STORAGE (4oC /40oF) Unless otherwise indicated, store in plastic bag or covered container	SPECIAL TIPS
Apples August to January	No - Apples tend to soften 10 times faster at room temperature.	2 months	Ethylene producer* Apples will absorb odors from potatoes, onions and other fragrant produce.
Apples February to July	No - Apples tend to soften 10 times faster at room temperature.	2 to 3 weeks in perforated plastic bag in crisper	Ethylene producer* Apples will absorb odors from potatoes, onions and other fragrant produce
Apricots	Until ripe	Once ripe, 1 week, uncovered	Ethylene producer*
Atemoya/Cherimoya	Until ripe	Once ripe, 3 to 5 days	For best flavour, serve cold.
Avocado	Until ripe	Once ripe, 2 to 5 days	Ethylene producer*
Bananas	Until ripe	Once ripe, 1 to 2 days, uncovered	Unripe bananas are ethylene sensitive. Ripe bananas are ethylene producers.*
Blueberries	No	10 days, loosely covered	Ready to eat, store in shallow container.
Carambola (Star Fruit)	Until ripe	Once ripe, 1 week	Ethylene producer*
Cherries	No	3 days	Sweet cherries will absorb odours from fragrant produce. Select cherries with stems since stems prolong shelf life.
Coconut	1 to 2 weeks	1 to 2 weeks, whole, uncovered	Refrigerate grated coconut for 1 week.
Cranberries	No	2 weeks	
Grapefruit	1 week; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	1 month; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	Grapefruit produce odours that are absorbed by meat, eggs and dairy products.
Grapes	No	5 days	Grapes will absorb odours produced by leeks and green onions.
Kiwifruit	Until ripe	1 to 2 weeks (ripe)	Unripe kiwifruit is ethylene sensitive. Ripe kiwi fruit is an ethylene producer*
Lemons and Limes	1 week; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	1 month; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	Lemons and limes produce odours that are absorbed by meat, eggs and dairy products.
Lychee/Longon	No	1 to 2 weeks	For best flavour, choose fruit that is full, heavy and not cracked.
Mangoes	Until ripe	Once ripe, 3 days.	Ethylene producer*
Melons (most types, e.g. cantaloupe, honeydew, casaba, Crenshaw, Santa Claus, etc.)	Until ripe	3 days (ripe), whole, uncovered	Ethylene producer*. Always refrigerate cut melon; cover well and store away from other produce. Use cut melon within two days.

Nectarines	Until ripe	Once ripe, 1 week	Ethylene producer*
Oranges	1 week; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	1 month; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	Oranges produce odors that are absorbed by meat, eggs and dairy products.
Papaya	Until ripe	Once ripe, 1 week	Ethylene producer*. Only store fully or half-ripened papaya in the refrigerator since cool temperatures shut down the ripening process.
Passion Fruit	No	Once ripe, 1week	Ethylene producer*
Peaches	Until ripe	1 week. Store uncovered in a single layer	Ethylene producer*
Pears	Until ripe	2 to 3 days. Store uncovered in a single layer.	Ethylene producer*. Pears are ripe when flesh around stem gives to gentle pressure.
Persimmon	Until ripe	Once ripe, 3 days	Ethylene producer*
Pineapple	No	3 days, uncovered	Pineapples will absorb odors produced by avocados and green peppers.
Plantain	Until ripe	Once ripe, 2 to 3 weeks, uncovered	Plantains must be cooked before eating. Do not refrigerate unless very ripe.
Plums	Until ripe	Once ripe, 3 to 5 days	Ethylene producer*
Pomegranates	No	3 to 4 weeks	
Prickly Pear	Until ripe	1 to 2 days	
Raspberries	No	1 to 2 days, loosely covered in shallow container	
Rhubarb	No	5 days	Rhubarb will absorb odors produced by avocados and green onions.
Strawberries	No	1 to 2 days, loosely covered in shallow container	Wash in cool water with the cap attached. For optimal flavour allow strawberries to reach room temperature before eating.
Tangerines	1 week; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	1 month; store loosely in open or perforated plastic bag	Tangerines produce odors that are absorbed by meat, eggs and dairy products.
Watermelon	Few days	Once ripe, 1 week, whole, uncovered.	Ethylene sensitive*. Always refrigerate cut melon; cover well and store away from other produce. Use cut melon within two days.

* Do not store ethylene sensitive produce with produce that produces ethylene.

VEGETABLE STORAGE GUIDE

VEGETABLE	ROOM TEMP STORAGE (20-20°C/68-72°F)	REFRIGERATED STORAGE (4oC /40oF) Unless otherwise indicated, store in plastic bag or covered container	SPECIAL TIPS
Artichokes	No	1 week	Sprinkle with water before storing.
Asparagus	No	4 days	Wrap base of stalks in damp paper towel then place in plastic bag or store with stalks upright in water.
Beans- green & wax	No	5 days	Ethylene sensitive*. Beans are susceptible to chilling injury which results in surface pitting and "russetting".
Beets	No	3 to 4 weeks	Remove tops before storing.
Belgium Endive	No	2 to 3 weeks	Ethylene sensitive*. Keep dry and away from light.
Broccoli	No	5 days, store in perforated plastic bag in vegetable crisper	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene gas hastens yellowing of the broccoli buds.
Brussels Sprouts	No	5 days, store in perforated plastic bag in vegetable crisper	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene gas hastens yellowing and can cause leaf separation.
Cabbage – green and red	No	2 to 3 weeks	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene gas hastens leaf separation & discolouration. Cabbage will absorb odours from apples and pears.
Cabbage - Chinese	No	1 week, tightly wrapped with plastic wrap.	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene gas hastens leaf separation & discolouration. Cabbage will absorb odours from apples and pears.
Carrots – young	No	2 weeks, covered	Ethylene sensitive*. Remove tops before storing. Exposure to ethylene gas will make carrots taste bitter. Carrots absorb odours from apples and pears.
Carrots – mature	No	3 to 4 weeks, covered	Ethylene sensitive*. Remove tops before storing. Exposure to ethylene gas will make carrots taste bitter. Carrots absorb odours from apples and pears.
Cauliflower	No	1 week for whole head	Ethylene sensitive*.
Celery	No	2 weeks	Celery will absorb odours from apples, carrots, onions and pears.

Corn – on the cob	No	In husks for 2 to 3 days. Husked for 1 to 2 days, wrapped in a damp towel.	Corn will absorb odours from green onions. It is best to use fresh corn-on-the-cob as soon as possible because once they are picked the natural sugars turn to starch quickly.
Cucumbers – field or greenhouse	No	1 week	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene will turn cucumbers yellow.
Eggplant	No	5 days	Ethylene sensitive*. Eggplant will absorb odors produced by ginger root.
Garlic	Few weeks to several months in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location	No. Refrigeration may cause sprouting.	Storage time varies with maturity.
Ginger Root	No	2 weeks	
Greens - lettuce varieties (including: iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, green & red leaf, spinach)	No	1 week for lettuce varieties, wash prior to storage	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene gas increases "russet" spotting.
Greens - other varieties (including: collards, dandelion greens, kale, mustard greens, Swiss chard, turnip greens)	No	2 to 4 days for other varieties, do not wash prior to storage	Ethylene sensitive*. Exposure to ethylene gas increases "russet" spotting.
Herbs (including basil, thyme, tarragon, chervil, oregano, cilantro, mint, etc.)	No	4 to 7 days, put stems into water and cover with plastic bag	Fresh basil is susceptible to cold, so keep at the front of the refrigerator and use as soon as possible. Hardier herbs such as oregano, rosemary and sage will last longer than more delicate herbs such as basil, dill, chives.
Mushrooms (white, cremini, oyster, enoki, shiitake, portabello, morels, etc.)	No	5 days in paper bag	Mushrooms will absorb odours from green onions. Just before using, rinse in cool water (do not soak), or wipe with a damp cloth or soft vegetable brush. Mushrooms bruise easily - do not store other vegetables on top of them. Morels require thorough washing to remove sand.
Onions (Green onion, Leeks)	No	1 week	Ethylene producer*. Tightly wrap any cut pieces of onion and store away from other produce. Use within 2 or 3 days.

Onions (Cooking)	3 to 4 weeks in single layer, in mesh bag in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location	No	Ethylene producer*. Cooking onions will absorb odours from apples and pears. Cooking onions draw moisture from vegetables they are stored with which may cause them to decay.
Onions (Sweet)	1 to 2 weeks in single layer, in mesh bag in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location	1 month, uncovered	Ethylene producer*. Sweet onions have a greater water and sugar content than cooking onions. This makes them sweeter and milder tasting, but also reduces their shelf life
Parsnips	No	3 to 4 weeks	
Peas (Snow Peas, Sugar Snap Peas)	No	1-3 days; store loosely in plastic bag	Ethylene sensitive*
Peppers (Sweet Bell Peppers)	No	1 week	Ethylene sensitive*
Peppers (Hot Peppers including: jalapen, Serrano, habanero, etc.)	No	1 to 2 weeks	Ethylene sensitive*
Potatoes – New	No	1 week	Only new potatoes can be refrigerated. Potatoes will absorb odors produced by pears. If mature potatoes are refrigerated dark spots can occur and an unpleasant sweet flavour will develop when cooked.
Potatoes – Mature	1 to 2 weeks in paper bag, in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location	No	If kept in warm temperatures, potatoes will sprout and shrivel. Exposure to light causes potatoes to turn green. Trim any green area away before cooking.
Pumpkins	1 week; whole, uncovered in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location		
Radishes	No	2 weeks	Remove tops before storing
Rutabaga	1 to 2 weeks	3 weeks, uncovered	
Sprouts (Alfalfa, Bean, Lentil, Mung, Soybean, etc.)	No	2 to 4 days	Wash and drain sprouts just before using.
Squash – Summer (including: Zucchini, Yellow Crookneck, Straightneck, Patty Pan, etc.)	No	1 week	Summer squash have a tender skin and need to be trimmed but not peeled before preparing and eating. The rind and seeds are edible.

Squash – Winter (including: Spaghetti, Hubbards, Butternut, Buttercup, Acorn, Turban, etc.)	1 week, whole, uncovered in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location	No	Ethylene sensitive*. Hubbard squash and other dark skinned squash turn orange-yellow in the presence of ethylene gas. Winter squash have a thick skin and need to be trimmed and peeled before preparing and eating. Most varieties also need to be seeded.
Sweet Potatoes/Yams	1 week, whole, uncovered in a dry, cool, dark, well ventilated location	No	Ethylene sensitive*. Sweet potatoes and yams can be used interchangeably in recipes.
Tomatoes	3 to 4 days, uncovered, out of direct sunlight, until ripe; when ripe use in 1 to 2 days	No. Stops ripening and affects flavour.	Ethylene producer*. Refrigerate only when well ripened, but will affect flavour
Turnip	No	1 week	Turnips need to be scrubbed but not peeled before preparing and eating

* Do not store ethylene sensitive produce with produce that produces ethylene.