

Food Safety: Keeping Produce Fresh¹

Jennifer Hillan and Amarat Simonne²

Have you ever wondered whether to store watermelon in the refrigerator or on the counter? Read on for storage guidelines and other tips for keeping your fruits and vegetables as fresh and safe to eat as possible!



Choose produce that has been kept refrigerated or cool and looks fresh and undamaged.



Place soft produce on top of heavier items so it doesn't get bruised.



Keep fresh produce cool when taking it home from the store or farmer's market.



Store fresh produce in the right place—either on a counter top away from direct sunlight, or in the refrigerator (see Table 1).



Wash fresh produce (with cool running water only) just before using.



Clean everything—utensils, cutting boards, dishware, and hands—before preparing produce.

-
1. This document is FCS8909, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. First published May 2010. Reviewed April 2016. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
 2. Jennifer Hillan, MSH, RD, LD/N, former ENAFS nutrition educator/trainer and Amarat Simmone, Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

TYPE OF PRODUCE	STORAGE TIME & TEMPERATURE
Climacteric Fruits (temperate):	
Apricots, avocados, figs, kiwifruit, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums	Ripen at room temperature, then refrigerate for up to 3–5 days
Climacteric Fruits (tropical):	
Bananas*, mangoes*, pineapple*, plantains*	Room temperature, but not beyond peak ripeness
Small Fruits and Berries:	
Grapes	Refrigerated, 3–5 days
Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries	Refrigerated, 2–3 days
Melons:	
Cantaloupe*, watermelon*	Room temperature when whole, but refrigerated when cut
Other Fruits:	
Apples	Room temperature, up to one week, or refrigerated, up to one month
Citrus (grapefruit, lemons, oranges)	Room temperature for a few days, or refrigerated, up to two weeks
Vegetables:	
Artichokes	Refrigerated, 2–3 days
Broccoli, celery, green onions, lettuce, peas, summer squash	Refrigerated, 3–5 days
Carrots, cauliflower, sweet corn	Refrigerated, up to 1 week
Asparagus, cabbage, radishes	Refrigerated, up to 2 weeks
Greens (mustard, kale, collard, spinach)	Refrigerated, 2–3 weeks
Cucumbers*, eggplant*, tomatoes*, winter squash*, peppers*	Room temperature
Garlic*, onions*	Room temperature, ventilated storage
Potatoes*	Room temperature, ventilated storage, away from light
Cut fruit/vegetables and fresh herbs	Refrigerated and eaten as soon as possible
<i>* Storage times vary for these items depending on your storage conditions. Look at the quality of the produce to decide whether to use it or throw it away.</i>	