



## Best way to store your fruits and vegetables

Eating fresh food doesn't have to be a costly experience. Especially when you properly wash and store your produce. It can last days, weeks or months! Here are the best ways of storing the most common fruits and vegetables.

*Apples:* Cold storage at low refrigerator temperatures [2-4°C] to help minimize loss of nutrients. To help maintain some moisture, place a damp cheesecloth next to the apples in the crisper bin of a refrigerator.

*Bananas:* You can refrigerate ripened bananas to help them retain their vitamin content. Don't be alarmed when the peel turns dark brown; the flesh will not be affected. Do **not** refrigerate bananas until they are ripe. If wanting to freeze them, either puree or peel and place in a plastic wrap. Bananas can be frozen for up to 2 months.

*Berries [Blueberries, Raspberries, Strawberries]:* Remove any crushed or moldy berries to prevent the rest from spoiling, and then place in the refrigerator. Since water encourages spoilage, do not wash berries before refrigeration\*. Fresh berries can last from 3-7days. They freeze well too! Place fresh, washed berries on a lined cookie-sheet. Make sure there is enough room so they aren't touching. Place in freezer for 5-8 hours. Then remove and transfer to a freezer safe container or bag. Frozen berries can be kept for 3-5 months.

\*If you are preparing ahead of time, you may want to consider washing your berries in an apple cider vinegar [ACV] wash. This will help keep berries fresh for the evening as the ACV will prevent spoilage that water alone encourages.

*Grapes:* Loosely wrap unwashed grapes in a paper towel and place them in an airtight container or plastic bag. Store in a refrigerator. This will help keep them fresh for 5-10 days.

*Lemons & Limes & Oranges:* Fresh lemons and oranges are juicier when kept at room temperature and can last for up to 7 days if not refrigerated. If you don't plan on using the lemons/ oranges within a few days of purchasing them, then store in the refrigerator. This will keep for 10-14 days. Same directions as above for limes however, they have a shorter shelf life. Limes on the counter can last up to 5 days and between 7-12 days in the refrigerator. Lemon, lime and orange juice can be frozen in ice cube trays, and then transferred into a storage container for future use. Dried lemon, lime or orange zest should be stored in a cool and dry place in an airtight glass container.

*Pineapple:* For the best flavor, serve pineapples at room temperature. Avoid storing in sealed plastic bags, as this will create an ideal condition that causes the natural gasses to rot the pineapple. Shelf life of a ripe pineapple is 3 days and up to 5 days in a refrigerator.



*Watermelon:* Fresh, ripe watermelon can last for up to 1 week when properly stored. Uncut watermelons are best stored at temperatures 10-16°C. This is below the average room temperature and higher than a refrigerator. Best storage would be in a cellar or basement that are partially or below ground level. Once cut, watermelons should be refrigerated in order to best preserve their freshness, taste and juiciness. Store the cut watermelon in a sealed, hard plastic or glass container with a lid.

*Asparagus:* Asparagus will last for 5-9 days when properly handled. Store fresh asparagus in the vegetable crisper section of the refrigerator. Wrap the ends in a damp paper or cloth towel helps offset the respiration rate during storage [this is a good thing]. Place in a plastic storage bag before refrigerating. Squeeze out as much air as possible from the bag. Do not wash before refrigerating.

*Avocado:* Ripe avocados will remain fresh for up to 2-4 days. Do not refrigerate unripe [hard] avocados as they will rot, not ripen. Avocados will ripen on the counter at room temperature. If you want to speed up the ripening process, place avocado in a brown paper bag for several days [check on them frequently to ensure that they do not get overripe]. Once they are cut squeeze fresh lime or lemon juice to deter them from turning brown. Or, if you have a half an avocado, carefully remove the pit and place the cut side down in a bowl that contains 1Tbsp lemon juice and 1 C water. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate it. Eat within 1 day.

*Beets:* When properly handled, beets can remain fresh for 3-5 weeks. Store fresh beets in the vegetable crisper section of the refrigerator. The colder temperature will help keep beets fresher, longer. Do not wash before storing. Place in a tightly zipped [little air as possible] plastic bag. If your beets come with the greens, remove them and store the same way as beets but in a separate bag. The greens will last 4-10 days.

*Bell Peppers:* Bell peppers can have a long shelf life when stored properly, however they drastically lose their nutrient content after 7 days. Best to eat them within a week of purchasing. Much like apples, bell peppers need to stay well hydrated therefore place a damp cloth or paper towel in the vegetable crisper compartment. Place bell peppers in a plastic storage bag before refrigerating. Tightly wrap bag around the peppers while squeezing out as much air as possible. Store cut pepper in a container with a well-sealed lid or wrapped tightly in a plastic bag and refrigerate. Since the vitamin C content degrades quickly once it has been cut, it is best to use the remainder within a day or two.

*Broccoli:* Store fresh broccoli in a plastic bag with as much air removed as possible. Place in vegetable crisper. Do not wash broccoli before refrigerating. This will keep fresh for 7 days. Freezing fresh broccoli is simple: steam for 4 minutes and cool. Place on cookie sheet so no broccoli is touching each other, then place in freezer for 5-8 hours. It will keep up to one year.



Carrots: Carrots will remain fresh for up to 2 weeks. If you buy carrots with tops, cut them off before storing. The green tops will pull moisture from the carrots leaving them with less flavor and crunch. Carrots should be placed in a plastic bag, with air squeezed out, and in a vegetable crisper. Also note, they shouldn't be kept near apples as this can cause the carrots to become bitter.

Garlic: Garlic can last for 1-2 months when handled properly. To do so, place uncovered in a cool, dark place away from heat and light. Do not refrigerate garlic, as this will cause it to spoil.

Greens [Kale, Collard, Mustard, Spinach...]: Do not wash greens before refrigeration and avoid storing cooked, as it will not keep very well. First, place in a plastic bag with air squeezed out and wrapped tightly around the greens. Then store in the vegetable crisper section. The cooler temperature will help keep green fresh for longer. When properly stored the greens will last for up to 10 days.

Mushrooms: To maximize freshness remove from packaging and place in a loosely closed paper bag, wrapped in a damp cloth. Avoid clumping together by placing single layers of paper towel in-between single layers. This allows for optimal respiration. Do not wash mushrooms\*. \* Mushrooms are very porous and will quickly absorb water; thus making them soggy. Instead, gently wipe with a damp paper towel or mushroom brush.

Onions: Onions are classified as "Bulb Type" or "Green Type" and, depending on the variety, they can be stored for 6-9 months at optimum temperature. Optimum storage temperature for *mild* onions is 0-5°C for approximately 15-30 days. Optimum storage temperatures for *pungent* onions are 6-9 months while at 0-5°C. This must be in a cool, dry place out of heat and light, not in a refrigerator. Do not refrigerate uncut bulb onions since moisture from the fridge will cause them to spoil. Be sure that onions are stored away from potatoes. Their natural gasses released from the potatoes will cause the onions to rot much sooner. Green onions can be stored whole in a tightly wrapped plastic bag. Do not wash before storing. Unused portions of cut onions should be placed in a sealed container and should be used within a day or two as it loses its nutrients very quickly.

Potatoes: Potatoes will remain fresh for 1-2 months. They should not be stored in the refrigerator, as their starch content will turn to sugar giving them an undesirable taste. This is due to the moisture content found in the fridge; which increases conversion of the starches to sugar and adversely affects the flavor. Best option is to store in root cellar or basement below ground for an ideal temperature of 4-7°C. Place them in a burlap or brown paper bag, out of heat or direct light. This is the same for Sweet potatoes.



Summer Squash: Summer squash can be kept from 2-5 weeks. Can be stored in refrigerator once ripe. Or on the counter to ripen further. To freeze winter squash, first cut [or grate] it into pieces suitable for individual recipes and store in freezer storage container.

Tomatoes: Refrigerating tomatoes, especially unripe ones, will cause them to go spongy and lose some nutrients and flavor. Keep at room temperature and out of direct sunlight. Depending on the variety, they will keep from 7-12 days. If tomato has already been sliced, place in an airtight container or a storage bag. Since the nutrient content quickly declines, it is best to eat within 1-2 days.

Winter Squash: Depending on the variety winter squash can be kept from 1 - 6 month[s]. The ideal storage temperature is 10-15°C and out of directly heat and sunlight. To freeze winter squash, first cut [or grate] it into pieces suitable for individual recipes and store in freezer storage container.