

FRESH PRODUCE GUIDE

Food Quality and Safety

Food distributed to families must be good quality. Proper food handling provides both safe and good quality foods.

Fresh produce quality and safety depends on:

- The conditions at harvest
- Length of time since harvest
- Temperature the produce has been held
- The way the food is transported
- The length of time it is stored

Overripe or bruised fruit may not look good, but it may still be safe.

Keep It Clean

Keep hands, work surfaces, utensils, and the refrigerator clean. Germs or bacteria can contaminate food during handling. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water to remove germs or bacteria before handling fresh produce. This can greatly reduce the risk of food poisoning. Never handle raw meat before fresh produce without washing hands and disinfecting work surfaces first.

Handling Fresh Produce Deliveries

1. Sort fresh fruit and vegetables by quality and level of ripeness.
 - Fully ripe and over-ripe produce should be used first
 - Discard moldy produce
 - Discard produce badly bruised or with large soft spots
 - Produce with some spots, soft areas or bruises is generally safe to use
 - Overripe or bruised fruit may not look good, but it may still be safe
2. Washing produce introduces extra moisture that can cause spoilage.
3. Label produce with delivery dates.

Distribution

Use clean food boxes, storage bags or plastic wrap. Leave the opening loose so as not to trap extra moisture.

Distribute oldest produce first

Advise families:

- Wash produce prior to use
- Wash under running water and scrub with clean hands or a clean brush
- Not to soak produce in water since this increases chances of cross-contamination
- Dry the washed produce with clean paper towels or air dry
- Do not use cloth towels since they can cause contamination.

Refrigerator Tips

Maintain a refrigerator temperature between 32°F and 40°F.

Open the refrigerator door as little as possible; warm air enters, rising the temperature, and lowers food quality.

Keep any raw meat on the lowest shelf in the refrigerator and fresh produce toward the top shelf. This will prevent contamination of the produce.

Holding Produce at Room Temperature

It is best if they are not stored in a closed room without ventilation since a gas (ethylene) will develop and ripen the produce faster.

The humidity of the room is important. The lower the humidity, the greater the water loss from produce, and the lower the final quality.

Some produce can be stored at room temperature until ripe:

Apples	Pears
Apricots	Plum
Avocados	Tomatoes
Bananas	Watermelon
Cantaloupe	Winter Squash
Honeydew Melon	Pumpkin
Kiwi	White Potatoes
Mangoes	Sweet Potatoes
Nectarine	Onions
Peaches	

Produce that can be stored at 45-50°F:

Basil	Oranges
Cucumber	Peppers
Eggplant	Pineapples
Grapefruit	Snap Beans
Lemons	Summer Squash
Limes	Tomatillos
Okra	

Refrigerate Produce After Cutting

Cut or sliced produce must always be refrigerated for food safety.