

PICKING THE PERFECT PRODUCE



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Are you having a difficult time selecting your produce? Do you often buy spoiled or under-ripe fruits and vegetables without knowing? Here are a few basic tips you can follow to bring home the freshest fruits and vegetables.

Fruit

- **Smell it.** When fruit is at its peak ripeness it will smell very sweet and fruity. If a fruit smells sour or strong it can mean it is over ripe. Best fruits to smell: melons, peaches, nectarines, pineapple, berries and citrus fruits.
- **Squeeze it.** Giving a fruit a gentle squeeze can help you decipher if it's ripe. With most fruits you want them to be firm, but give a little. Fruits that are rock hard are not usually ripe. Citrus fruits that are too firm are usually dry. Best fruits to squeeze: lemons, limes, kiwis, mangos, stone fruit, avocados and apricots.
- **Check the skin.** Pick up the fruit and make sure the surface is smooth and even, with a firm but not hard surface. A uniform, vibrant color usually indicates that produce is ripe and ready to eat. If you feel or see bruises, dents or pits, the fruit may possibly be damaged and may be rotting. Best fruits to check the skin: bananas, pears, berries, figs and apples.
- **Check the bottom of the container.** When buying fruits like berries, cherries or figs make sure to check the bottom of the container to ensure freshness.

Vegetables

- **Check the leaves.** Bright, vibrant green leaves are a good indicator that your vegetables are fresh. The fresher the leaves, the fresher the produce. Cracks in the base of root vegetables may mean they are too dry. Best vegetables to check the leaves: carrots, beets, radishes and lettuce.
- **Check the color.** Just like that of fruit, a uniform, vibrant color is optimal when buying vegetables. Hints of green can indicate the produce is not ripe enough and hints of brown can indicate the produce is too ripe. Vegetables with a stinky smell could be over-ripe or already rotting. Best vegetables to check the color: asparagus, celery, cucumbers, kale, peas, tomatoes and rhubarb.
- **Check the skin.** The skin should feel firm and should snap when you break it. Softness can indicate rotting or bruising. Best vegetables to check the skin and for crispiness: green beans, scallions, peppers, lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, Brussel sprouts and asparagus.

Shop seasonally for your produce. Shopping for produce that is currently being grown will likely lead to better quality produce and lower prices. Ask your local grocery store what days they have produce delivered. This will help ensure you get the best quality produce. Farmers markets are another great way to get your produce that is fresh and in season. Happy shopping!

