



Proper care of fresh produce

- Store your purchases properly. Fresh food and plants are easily damaged and bruised.
- Store leafy greens in a loose, open plastic bag in your refrigerator.
- Store tomatoes with the stem end up. Tomatoes continue to ripen after picking, so don't worry about some green at the top. Never store tomatoes in the refrigerator, as they will quickly lose flavor.
- Don't wash berries until you are ready to use them. Try to use berries within three or four days of buying them.
- Treat cut herbs like flowers and stand them in a vase with water. If you purchase herbs as live plants, pay close attention to the sun requirements.
- Store tomatoes with the stem end up, as it grows on the vine. The shoulders are the most tender part and bruise easily. Tomatoes will continue to ripen some after picking, so don't worry about a little green at the top. Never store tomatoes in the refrigerator, as they will quickly lose their flavor.
- Don't wash berries until you are ready to use them; the best way to keep them is in a single layer on a baking sheet. Try to use berries within three or four days of buying them.
- Freeze berries of all kinds by laying them carefully on a baking sheet and placing the sheet in the freezer. Once they're frozen, then bag them up in freezer bags. That way, they'll pour out easily instead of freezing into a hard lump.
- Root vegetables such as beets, carrots and turnips should have the tops removed as soon as you get home. The tops pull moisture from the roots, shortening their shelf life.
- Winter squash varieties keep well if stored in a cool, dry place. Look for those with no cuts in the skin or soft spots.
- Remember that hard shelled squash varieties are not only great fall decorating items, but are also edible. If too hard to cut in half, bake it whole at 350 degrees until tender. Then it slices easily.

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