

Fruit & Vegetable Storage Guide

How to make your food last longer and keep it from going to waste.

IN THE FRIDGE



Apples

Store loose and away from other produce



Leafy Herbs

Store in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top



Oranges

Store loose in crisper drawer



Cabbage

Store loose in crisper drawer

IN THE CUPBOARD



Onions

Store loose or in a mesh bag separate from potatoes

ON THE COUNTER



Bananas

Store separate from other produce

IN THE CUPBOARD



Potatoes

Store loose or in a paper bag separate from onions

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INSIDE: TIPS FOR PREVENTING FOOD WASTE THAT CAN SAVE YOU MONEY ON GROCERIES

Americans throw away as much as 25% of the food we buy.



Why does it matter?

Wasted Food = Wasted Resources

Worldwide, it takes 2.5 billion acres of land just to grow the food we waste, and 25% of all freshwater in America is used to produce wasted food.

When we throw away food, we also waste all the water and energy used to produce, package and transport it.

Wasted Food = Wasted Money

The average family throws away \$130 of edible food each month. Besides leaving less money to spend on other things, wasting food can increase its cost. As demand for food rises, so do the costs of limited resources—like land and water—to produce it, which drives up prices at the store.





BUT WHAT ABOUT COMPOSTING?

Composting is great for the environment, but eating the food we buy (preventing food from becoming waste) is even better.

Not everyone has enough.

50 million Americans face hunger, and 1 in 6 lack a secure supply of food. Rising food prices impact low-income families the hardest, since a larger portion of their income goes toward buying food.



What can you do?

Fruits and vegetables are the most commonly wasted foods. By using the food storage tricks in this guide, you can make your produce last longer and ensure it gets eaten.



Go to seattle.gov/util/ReduceReuse for more tips on how to prevent wasted food.

Fruit & Vegetable Storage Guide



Where to Store

These guidelines help to achieve ideal temperature and moisture levels, which vary by produce item.

4 Places to Store

Counter
Cupboard/Pantry
Fridge (anywhere)
Fridge – crisper drawer

How to Store

Most of these guidelines help to balance moisture with airflow for different produce items. For example, reducing airflow by storing in a sealed container increases moisture, while storing loose or in a paper bag decreases it.

Fruit/Vegetable

Where to Store It

How to Store It

	Acorn Squash	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose.
	Apples	Fridge	Separate from other produce.
	Apricots	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Artichokes	Fridge	Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
	Arugula	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Asparagus	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.



Did you know

Apples keep ripening after they're picked, so keeping them in the fridge will preserve them better.



Tips and Tricks

To make cut avocados last longer, leave pit in and brush surface with lemon or lime juice. Refrigerate in a sealed container.



Did you know

Like many fruits, bananas give off ethylene gas, which can cause nearby produce to spoil. Keeping bananas separate helps ensure a longer shelf life for other items.



Did you know

Wondering why a **dry towel** is recommended for some items? For those that shouldn't get too moist, try towels help absorb unneeded dampness.

Fruit/Vegetable		Where to Store It	How to Store It
	Avocados	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Bananas	Counter	Store away from other fruits and vegetables.
	Basil	Counter	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
	Beans	Fridge	Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
	Beets	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see “Leafy Greens”).
	Bell Peppers	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Berries (examples: blueberries, strawberries)	Fridge	Store in a shallow container lined with a dry towel; leave lid slightly cracked for air circulation. Wash only when ready to eat.
	Bok Choy	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Broccoli, Broccolini	Fridge – crisper drawer	Wrap in a damp towel.
	Broccoli Rabe	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Brussel Sprouts	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store in a sealed container.



Did you know

Wondering why some instructions suggest a **damp towel**?

For items that need a bit more moisture, damp towels help preserve proper humidity.



Tips and Tricks

Many fruits give off a gas that makes other produce spoil, so storing **fruits and veggies in separate crisper drawers** can help prevent veggies from ripening too quickly.

Fruit/Vegetable		Where to Store It	How to Store It
	Butternut Squash	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose.
	Cabbage	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Cantaloupe	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Carrots	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see “Leafy Greens”).
	Cauliflower	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
	Celery	Fridge	Store in a sealed container.
	Chard	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Cherries	Fridge	Store in a plastic bag or sealed container. Wash only when ready to eat.
	Chives	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
	Cilantro		
	Citrus Fruits	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Collard Greens	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Corn	Fridge	Store loose.
	Cucumbers	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.

4 Basic Tools



Container with
tight-fitting lids



Cloth or
paper towel



Glass or cup



Paper bag



Did you know

One rotten grape can
spoil the rest. With grapes
– as with cherries and all
berries – remove rotting
fruit before storing.

Fruit/Vegetable		Where to Store It	How to Store It
	Daikon Radish	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see “Leafy Greens”).
	Dandelion Greens	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Dill	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
	Eggplant	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Endive	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Escarole		
	Garlic	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose.
	Grapefruit	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Grapes	Fridge	Store in a sealed container. Wash only prior to eating.
	Green Beans	Fridge	Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
	Green Onions	Fridge	Wrap in a damp towel.
	Herbs, leafy (examples: cilantro, parsley)	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top. Exception: See “Basil.”
	Herbs, woody (examples: rosemary, sage)	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Wrap in a damp towel and store in a sealed container.



Did you know

To **spruce up greens** that have gone limp, immerse them in ice water for 30 minutes or place upright in a glass of water for a few hours.



Tips and Tricks

Once cut, store melon in a sealed container or cover with plastic film and refrigerate.

Fruit/Vegetable	Where to Store It	How to Store It	
	Honeydew	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Hot Peppers	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Kale	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Kiwi	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Leafy Greens	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Leeks	Fridge – crisper drawer	Wrap in a damp towel.
	Lemons	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Lettuce	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Limes	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Mangos	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Marjoram	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Wrap in damp towel and store in a sealed container.
	Melons	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Mint	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
	Mushrooms	Fridge	Store in a paper bag.



Did you know

Wondering what's the use of **paper bags**? For produce that shouldn't get too damp, paper bags help absorb moisture without letting produce dry out completely.



Tips and Tricks

To help partially-eaten peppers last longer, store inside a sealed container with seeds and stems attached.

Fruit/Vegetable		Where to Store It	How to Store It
	Mustard Greens	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Nectarines	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Okra	Fridge	Store in a paper bag.
	Onions	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose or in a mesh bag separate from potatoes.
	Oranges	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Oregano	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Wrap in a damp towel and store in a sealed container.
	Parsley	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
	Parsnips	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see "Leafy Greens").
	Peaches	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Pears		
	Peas	Fridge	Store in a sealed container.
	Peppers	Fridge – crisper drawer	Store loose.
	Pineapple	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Plums		



Did you know

Sulphur gas from onions makes potatoes spoil faster, so separating the two can help potatoes last longer.



Did you know

Berries can be more susceptible to mold than some other fruits, and too much moisture is often the culprit. Storing in an unsealed container increases air circulation and helps prevent mold, as does washing only prior to eating.

Fruit/Vegetable		Where to Store It	How to Store It
	Pomegranates	Fridge	Store loose.
	Potatoes	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose or in a paper bag separate from onions.
	Pumpkins	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose.
	Radicchio	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.
	Radishes	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see "Leafy Greens").
	Raspberries	Fridge	Store in a shallow container lined with a dry towel; leave lid slightly cracked for air circulation. Wash only when ready to eat.
	Rhubarb	Fridge	Wrap in a damp towel.
	Root Vegetables	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel.
	Rosemary	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Wrap in damp towel and store in a sealed container.
	Rutabagas	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see "Leafy Greens").
	Sage	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Wrap in damp towel and store in a sealed container.
	Scallions	Fridge	Wrap in a damp towel.
	Spinach	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.



Tips and Tricks

Once cut, refrigerate winter squash in a plastic bag or sealed container to extend shelf life.



Tips and Tricks

Want those tomatoes to ripen quicker? Place inside a paper bag with an apple and leave on the counter until they're ripe.

Fruit/Vegetable		Where to Store It	How to Store It
	Sprouts	Fridge	Store in a sealed container.
	Stone Fruits	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Strawberries	Fridge	Store in a shallow container lined with a dry towel; leave lid slightly cracked. Wash only when ready to eat.
	Squash, Summer	Fridge	Wrap whole or cut ends in a damp towel.
	Squash, Winter	Cupboard/Pantry	Store loose.
	Tarragon	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.
	Thyme	Fridge	Remove bands and ties. Wrap in damp towel and store in a sealed container.
	Tomatillos	Fridge	Store in a paper bag.
	Tomatoes	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store out of direct sunlight.
	Turnips	Fridge	Store in a sealed container with a dry towel. Store green tops separately (see "Leafy Greens").
	Watermelon	Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.	Store loose.
	Wax Beans	Fridge	Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.
	Zucchini	Fridge	Wrap whole or cut ends in a damp towel.

Tips to Prevent Food Waste

There are many ways to keep food from becoming waste.

WHICH ONES WORK FOR YOU?

Buy What You Need

- Plan meals and make a grocery list with quantities needed.
- Purchase local and in season when possible.
- Buy fresh items in smaller quantities and more often, if possible.

Track What You Have

- Store new items behind the old in your fridge and cupboards.
- Create an **"Eat Me Now"** box for your fridge.
- Use a white board or app to remember what needs to be eaten.

Store It to Last

- Use a fruit and veggie storage guide.
- Freeze what you can't finish.
- Prep items for easy snacking/cooking (example: chop celery into sticks before storing).

Use It All Up

- Have a regular **Leftovers Night**.
- Try out recipes that combine ingredients you have on hand.
- Use parts of food that are often discarded (example: carrot tops).



Know Your Dates

- A **Sell-By** date tells the store how long to display the product for sale. You should buy the product before the date expires.
- A **Use By** date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. The date has been determined by the manufacture of the product.
- A **Best if Used By (or Before)** date is recommended for best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

See the USDA's Food Product Dating Fact Sheet at fsis.usda.gov for information about how to store foods based on date labels.

USE BY:

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