

# STAYING WELL

## Summer Fruits & Veggies Q & A

Whether you grow them or purchase them, fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of the summer scene. The following tips can help you enjoy fruits and vegetables at their most flavorful.

**1. Which Fruits Continue to Ripen After They're Picked?** Apricots, bananas, cantaloupe, kiwi, mangoes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plantains and plums continue to ripen at room temperature after they're picked. To speed their ripening, put them in a loosely closed brown paper bag or ripening bowl at room temperature. Plastic bags don't work for ripening. Once fully ripened, fruits may be stored in the refrigerator to lengthen their storage time. Though the outside skin of a refrigerated banana will turn dark brown, the inside will remain light-colored. Fruits that should be picked or bought ripe and ready-to-eat include: apples, cherries, grapefruit, grapes, oranges, pineapple, strawberries, tangerines and watermelon.



**2. How Can I Keep Cut Fruit from Turning Brown?** Keep cut fruits, such as apples, pears, bananas and peaches, from turning brown by coating them with an acidic juice such as lemon, orange or pineapple juice. Cut fruits as close to serving time as possible. Cover and refrigerate cut fruit until ready to serve. Avoid leaving cut fruit at room temperature for more than two hours.

**3. Should Fruits and Vegetables Be Washed before They're Put Away?** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises that we wash our fresh fruits and vegetables when ready to eat them rather than when they're first purchased or picked. Here are some FDA guidelines for safely handling fruits and vegetables:

- Thoroughly rinse raw fruits and vegetables under running water before eating them. Don't use soap, detergents, or bleach solutions.
- If necessary -- scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Try to cut away damaged or bruised areas -- bacteria can thrive in these places.
- Any bacteria on the outside of fruits can be transferred to the inside when the fruit is peeled or cut. To prevent this, thoroughly rinse fruits that require peeling or cutting - such as cantaloupe and other melons -- under running water before eating them.
- If buying fresh, cut produce, be sure it is refrigerated or surrounded by ice. After purchase, put produce that needs refrigeration away promptly. (Fresh, whole produce such as bananas and potatoes do not need refrigeration.) Fresh produce should be refrigerated within two hours of peeling or cutting. Leftover cut produce should be discarded if left at room temperature for more than two hours.



**4. What Is the Best Place to Store Tomatoes: The Kitchen Counter or the Refrigerator?** Store tomatoes at room temperature (above 55 F) until they have fully ripened. This will allow them to ripen properly and develop good flavor and aroma. A ripe tomato is red or reddish orange, depending on variety, and yields to slight pressure. If you must store tomatoes for a longer period of time, place them (after they're fully ripened) in the refrigerator. Serve them at room temperature.



Source: University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension, Lancaster County

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