



Picking Perkier Produce

When shopping for vegetables, look for color and crispness.

Although you can usually find most vegetables year-round, they are usually at their best quality (and price!) at the peak of their season. Avoid produce that looks wilted or bruised, even if it is offered at a discounted price. If you have questions about what each vegetable or fruit should look like, the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service has a set of publications that list exactly what to look for. They are available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/howtobuy/>

It might be tempting to fill up your cart with fresh produce, but think about how much you will actually have time to eat. Try these tips to increase your fruit and vegetable intake while saving time (and money!):

- ↑ **Try grab-and-go fruits**, such as apples or bananas, that don't require any kind of preparation.
- ↑ **Look for pre-washed, pre-cut vegetables**, such as bagged salad mix or baby carrots.
- ↑ **Buy in bulk, but beware.** Buying in bulk is not always better. For example, if you know your family won't eat more than four potatoes, buying an entire bag because it's the better value really won't save you any money. You'll end up spending more for the bigger bag, then just throwing it away.



Preparation Tips For Your Produce

Begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce.

Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.

All produce should be thoroughly washed before eating. This includes produce grown conventionally or organically at home, or produce that is purchased from a grocery store or farmer's market. Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking.

Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first.

Washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes is not recommended.

Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.

Drying produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel may further reduce bacteria that may be present.

What About Pre-washed Produce?

Many pre-cut, bagged produce items like lettuce are pre-washed. If so, it will be stated on the packaging. This pre-washed, bagged produce can be used without further washing.

As an extra measure of caution, you can wash the produce again just before you use it. Pre-cut or pre-washed produce in open bags should be washed before using.

Source: www.fda.gov





GROCERY SHOPPING GUIDE

5 Tips to getting the most out of the market

- 1. Get Full.** Don't shop hungry. You've heard it before, and it's true. In fact, one financial analyst from Ball State University states that shopping hungry (along with impulse buying and lack of planning) leads to financial problems for millions of Americans. Bottom line: Make sure you're full before you leave; otherwise, you'll be tempted to throw unneeded items into the cart.
- 2. Clip And Save.** A little "homework" can go a long way. Make a list of everything you need and look in the newspaper for coupons on these items. Don't think it makes a difference? In 2000 alone, shoppers saved \$3.6 billion by using coupons.
- 3. Read Labels.** Learning to read the labels will give you a good idea of whether or not you're getting your money's worth. For example, ingredients are listed in order of their usage in the product. If a product heavily advertises a certain ingredient or element, and it's listed toward the bottom of the ingredient list, be skeptical.
- 4. Plan Meals.** Take an hour or two to plan your meals for the week. Write down all the ingredients that you'll need to buy for each meal. This will save you from multiple trips to the store when you go to buy just a few items but instead come out with a cart full of things you didn't intend on getting.
- 5. Set Limits.** Place a dollar amount on the items you consider an indulgence. This will help satisfy your craving to impulse buy, without breaking your budget.



Consider This...

Fast Food A BIG Business

As a nation, we spend a lot of money on fast food. Take a look at the statistics below—how do you compare?

1. The typical American consumes 3 hamburgers and 4 orders of french fries every week.
2. Twenty-one percent of adults order takeout on a daily basis.
3. Thirty-three percent of consumers agree that meals prepared away from home are essential to the way they live.
4. Fifty percent of consumers ages 18 to 24 eat on-the-go to keep up with their busy schedules. This is more frequent than two years ago.
5. Individuals under the age of 25 on average consume more than five commercially prepared meals per week.

Source: National Restaurant Association & Fast Food Nation

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