



# Buying, Storing, & Preparing **Fresh Produce**

## Buying Tips For Fresh Produce

You can help keep produce safe by making wise buying decisions at the grocery store.

- Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged.
- When selecting freshcut produce — such as half a watermelon or bagged mixed salad greens — choose only those items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- Bag fresh fruits and vegetables separately from meat, poultry and seafood products when packing them to take home from the market.

## Storage Tips For Fresh Produce

Proper storage of fresh produce can affect both quality and safety. To maintain quality of fresh produce:

- Certain perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms) can be best maintained by storing in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40° F or below. If you're not sure whether an item should be refrigerated to maintain quality, ask your grocer.
- All produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled should be refrigerated to maintain both quality and safety.
- Keep your refrigerator set at 40° F or below. Use a fridge thermometer to check!

## Preparation Tips For Fresh 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.

## Separate For Safety

Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood — and from kitchen utensils used for those products.

In addition, be sure to:

- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat, poultry and seafood products and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked.
- For added protection, kitchen sanitizers can be used on cutting boards and counter tops periodically. Try a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach to one quart of water.
- If you use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use.

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodsafe.html>

Continued on the following page...



To learn about spinach handling log on to:

[www.cdc.gov/foodborne/ecolispinach/](http://www.cdc.gov/foodborne/ecolispinach/)



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## **What About Pre-Washed Produce?**

Many precut, 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. Precut or pre-washed produce in open bags should be washed before using.

## **FOCUS ON: Health Risks With Raw Sprouts**

Raw sprouts that are served on salads, wraps, and sandwiches may contain bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Rinsing sprouts first will not remove bacteria. Home-grown sprouts also present a health risk if they are eaten raw or lightly cooked.

To reduce the risk of illness, do not eat raw sprouts such as bean, alfalfa, clover, or radish sprouts. All sprouts should be cooked thoroughly before eating to reduce the risk of illness.

This advice is particularly important for children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems, all of whom are at risk of developing serious illness due to foodborne disease.

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prosafe.html>