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Fre\$h Produce \$torage

To optimize our health, we know that – at a minimum – half of what we eat should be fruits and vegetables.

We are also aware that the price of produce, particularly fresh produce, is on the rise.

For our physical and financial health, let's look at how we can keep produce fresh for longer, reducing waste *and* saving money.

Produce Storage Tips

There are a few basic rules to storing produce:

- On the counter
- On the counter at room temperature until ripe, then put in the fridge
- In a cool location, and not in the fridge
- In the fridge
- In the freezer

Here are examples for each:

On the counter:

- Tomatoes
- Bananas (*put in a paper bag to ripen faster*)

On counter, at room temperature until ripe, then put in the fridge for longer storage

- Avocados, oranges, mangoes, melons, plums, peaches, and pears

In a cool location, and not in the fridge

- Garlic, onions, potatoes, and squash, in a well-ventilated, cool, dark area. Do not store onions and potatoes together, as the gas from the onions may quickly spoil your potatoes.

In the fridge

- Apples (*soften 10 times faster at room temperature than in the fridge*)
- Asparagus, wrapped with a moist paper towel or standing in a glass of cold water with tips wrapped in a produce bag
- Fresh tender herbs, like cilantro and parsley, standing in 1 – 2 inches of water, the top covered by a produce bag
- Fresh heads of lettuce, washed and dried well before refrigerating, and stored in a salad spinner or resealable bag with a paper towel

[This chart](#) gives some great tips on how and where to store produce in your fridge.

Freeze

Freezing veggies and fruits can be a fast and convenient way to preserve produce at its peak maturity and nutritional quality.

- Freeze darkened bananas for future use in smoothies or baking
- Freeze fruit pieces on a tray separately before putting in a freezer bag

Freezing is not recommended for artichokes, Belgian endive, eggplant, lettuce, potatoes (unless mashed), radishes, or sprouts.

Learn more by checking out [this Home Freezer Guide](#).

Other tips to keep in mind:

- Most fruits ripen best at room temperature. Once ripe, store fruit in the refrigerator in a plastic bag.
- Berries, cherries, grapes, and figs need to be refrigerated immediately. Discard any moldy berries before refrigerating, and store loosely in a shallow container covered with plastic wrap.
- For vegetables, remove or loosen tight bands and store in plastic bags, unless otherwise noted in the chart below.
- Separate root vegetables (such as radishes, beets, and turnips) from their greens, and store each separately in plastic bags. Most greens from root vegetables will stay fresh about 3 days.
- In general, avoid washing fruits or vegetables until they are ready to eat. However, if having a bowl of washed lettuce in the fridge helps you use it up more quickly, do what works for you. Once washed, dry it thoroughly and store in an airtight container lined with paper towels.
- Some fruits and vegetables – including apples, bananas, melons, pears, peaches, and tomatoes – emit ethylene gas as they ripen, which hastens the ripening of some other produce items. It's a good practice to store these ethylene emitters away from everything else.

Maximize your produce purchases by storing them properly to lengthen their freshness and reduce expensive spoilage and waste.

For everything you wanted to know about produce storage, check out this [complete Home Storage Guide](#).

Or print this [quick cheat sheet](#) for your fridge.

Sources:

<https://ivaluefood.com/resources/food-storage/produce-storage-cheat-sheet/>

<https://cpma.ca/education/produce-storage-guide>

<https://www.halfyourplate.ca/fruits-and-veggies/store-fruits-veggies/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/keep-your-produce-fresh/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.