

Scientific Tips to Keep Your Produce Fresher Longer

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Tomato + Cucumber = Faster Spoilage

The reason is ethylene, a gas from some fruits and vegetables that speeds ripening. It's a big reason for food waste. So store ethylene-emitting foods away from those that are sensitive to it.

Ethylene producers:

- Apple
- Cantaloupe
- Avocado
- Pear
- Tomato
- Pepper
- Banana

Ethylene sensitive:

- Mango
- Asparagus
- Peach
- Onion
- Eggplant
- Grape
- Cucumber



Wash Your Greens

Leafy green vegetables such as spinach and bibb, romaine, red leaf, and other types of lettuce will stay fresher longer if you rinse them in cool water before refrigerating. Toss out any wilted or discolored leaves. Dry the greens in a salad spinner or shake off the water and wrap them loosely in paper towels. Seal them in a plastic bag or container.



Leave the Wax On

Many fruits and vegetables, especially those grown in warm climates, have a natural waxy outer layer to prevent shrinking. Some crops get a coating of artificial wax. Wash it off only just before you're ready to eat. That helps prevent bruising and premature rotting. Coated produce includes apples, lemons, nectarines, oranges, cucumbers, bell peppers, potatoes, and eggplants.



Trim Carrots

Those green tops may be pretty. But they wick nutrients and freshness from the rest of the carrot. Slice off the green tops before storing. Refrigerate trimmed carrots loosely in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer. They should keep for several weeks. Pro tip: Save the greens to make pesto, chimichurri, or salad topping.



Keep Bananas Cool

Your sunny kitchen may be one of the worst places to keep these tropical fruits. Humid, warm air will speed up the browning. Keep them away from other produce. Once they've ripened to your liking, refrigerate bananas to extend their shelf life by a couple of days. The skin may turn mottled, but the inside should stay tasty.



Freeze Ginger

Love the pungent flavor of fresh ginger but never use it quickly enough before it turns gnarly or moldy? Ginger, also called ginger root, can last in your fridge for a few weeks. To keep it longer, toss it in your freezer. Chop, grate, or slice the ginger (no need to peel it). Wrap tightly with foil or a freezer bag to keep out air. It'll keep fresh for at least 3 months.



Let Onions Breathe

Good air circulation is key to keeping decay at bay. Store onions without plastic wrap in a cool, dry spot. If they're sold in a mesh bag, you can hang in on a hook in your pantry. Or make your own ventilated storage with an old, clean pair of pantyhose. Drop an onion in one leg and push it down to the toe. Then tie a knot above it, and drop another onion. Cut onions will keep for several days in the refrigerator.



Chill Berries

Strawberries are among the sweetest harvests of summer. But these tender fruits actually are cold hardy. In fact, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries should be refrigerated below 40 F, or even as cold as 32 F. That lengthens their shelf life. Moisture will turn them mushy or moldy quicker, so wash berries only at the last minute.



Wrap Celery in Foil

Like most vegetables, celery is almost all water. It's also sensitive to ethylene, the ripening gas. Help keep your celery from going limp by tightly covering it in foil and storing it in the crisper drawer. Or you can wrap it in a dry paper towel and put it into a plastic sleeve. The celery should last several weeks.



Bag Your Lemons

A bright yellow pile of citrus can brighten up any kitchen counter. That's also an ideal place to dry out your lemons and limes into hard orbs. But you can keep them juicy for up to a month. Seal the lemons tightly in a plastic storage bag with all the air out and put them in the fridge.



Keep Your Herbs Vertical

Treat cilantro, parsley, and mint like cut flowers. Place them in jars with water and then refrigerate. Bouquets of other soft-stemmed herbs like basil may prefer the warmer temperature on your counter. Or try this: Place fresh dry herbs in a plastic produce bag and blow into it like a balloon. The carbon monoxide from your breath is a known food preservative and can help keep the greens perky.



Vent Your Mushrooms

They're not a fruit or vegetable, but fungi. Mushrooms like to be kept cool and well-ventilated. A porous paper bag is a good choice. Free the mushrooms from their plastic-wrapped grocery container, which can trap moisture. They may keep in the fridge for up to a week. Run them under cool water just before you cook with them.



Deep-Clean Your Fridge

Several things affect how quickly your food spoils. They include light, air, temperature, and time. One you can control is microorganisms like bacteria, mold, and yeast. So wipe down the insides of your refrigerator regularly. White vinegar or soapy water work. Avoid packing too much food on the shelves and drawers so that air can circulate.



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