Shopping for Fruit

# Tips and tricks for the grocery store

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1. Apple

* To know the ripeness of an apple, look at the skin. Often when the skin is shiny, the apple will be juicy and crisp. Apples should be firm and have a fresh smell. When tapped with one finger, apples should sound hollow, not flat.
* Apples are in season in autumn.
* Apples should be kept in the refrigerator crisper.

1. Apricot

* To know the ripeness and quality of an apricot, check the firmness. A ripe apricot will be firm to the touch but give in when pressed. It will have a deep orange or yellow color, soft skin, and a sweet smell. Avoid apricots that are very soft, wrinkled, or have a green color.
* Apricots are in season in the summer.
* Ripe apricots can be stored in the refrigerator for 1 week. They will not ripen in the refrigerator. Apricots should be ripened at room temperature. Be careful because apricots bruise easily.

1. Avocado

* To know the ripeness and quality of an avocado, check the firmness. A ripe avocado will be firm to the touch but give in when pressed. An overripe avocado will feel overly soft. Avocados that feel as if the skin is disconnected from the inner part are likely brown or rotten on the inside.
* Avocados are in season in the summer.
* It is recommended avocados be bought unripe. They can then ripen at home. This ripening will take 2 to 5 days. A ripe avocado can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days before it is eaten.

1. Banana and Plantain

* To know the ripeness and quality of a banana and plantain, check the firmness. Yellow bananas with brown spots and a soft feel are fully ripe. They are very sweet and have the strongest flavor. However, many people do not like the texture of fully ripe bananas. They might rather have a solid yellow banana or those that still have a slightly green color. These bananas are good to eat too. They have a less sweet taste and firmer texture. Brown bananas are very sweet and are great for baking. Plantains are ripest and sweetest when they turn yellow-black.
* Bananas and plantains are in season in the winter.
* Bananas should be purchased while they are still a little green and allowed to ripen at home. Bananas stored in the refrigerator, or the freezer will turn black. These are still good to eat, and they are especially good for baking. But their texture will be different. Plantains take a long time (longer than bananas) to ripen.  
  It is best to plan ahead when making a recipe calling for plantains.

1. Berries such as blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries.

* To know the ripeness and quality of berries check the color. Ripe berries will have a deep color and no white or green color. Berries usually do not ripen once they are picked so they should be fully ripe when purchased at the grocery store. Good quality berries will be firm, dry, plump, and free from bruises. There should be no juice stains on the packages as this means crushed, soft, or moldy fruit. Dehydrated, wrinkled fruit means that the berries have been stored too long.
* Berries are usually in season in the spring.
* Berries can be kept on the counter. Berries should be kept in the refrigerator to lengthen storage time. Berries shouldn't be washed until they are going to be eaten.

1. Cantaloupe

* To know ripeness and quality of a cantaloupe check the smell. Cantaloupe does not ripen after being picked so it should be purchased when it fully ripened. A ripe cantaloupe will have a musky, sweet smell. If you gently press on the end opposite of the stem, it should give a little if the cantaloupe is ripe. Be careful though because you do not want it to be too soft or mushy. The rind of the cantaloupe should be free of bruises, holes, and mold. Also, the rind should be orange or golden, not green, which means an unripe fruit.
* Cantaloupe is in season in the summer.
* Cantaloupe can be chilled or kept at room temperature. However, those kept at room temperature will have the strongest flavor. Cut cantaloupe should be stored in the refrigerator.

1. Cherry

* To know the ripeness and quality of a cherry check the skin. Cherries should have firm and glossy skin. They should be free from bruises and have a dark color. Bright green stems are a good indication of freshness. Overripe cherries will have wrinkled skin or brown stems.
* Cherries are in season in the summer.
* Cherries can be kept on the counter but should be refrigerated to lengthen storage time. Cherries also freeze well.

1. Citrus fruit such as orange, grapefruit, clementine, tangerine, mandarin, lemon, or lime.

* To know the ripeness and quality of a citrus fruit, check the firmness. Citrus fruits should be firm and heavy for their size. Avoid those with bruises, moldy spots, or wrinkled skin. Citrus fruit should have a sweet, clean smell. Citrus fruits are ready to be eaten when they give in when squeezed. Color is a measure of climate, not ripeness. For example, oranges with green on them can still be ripe.
* Citrus fruits are in season in the winter.
* Citrus fruit can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator. They will ripen faster at room temperature.

1. Cranberry

* To know the ripeness and quality of cranberries check the skin. Cranberries should be red, hard, plump, and shiny. Ripe cranberries will float when placed in a bowl of water. They should also bounce. Cranberries should not be soft, mushy, or a different color.
* Cranberries are in season in autumn.
* Cranberries can be stored in a bag in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. They also freeze well.

1. Coconut

* To know the ripeness and quality of a coconut check the weight. A coconut should have a dark brown shell and feel heavy for its size. The three “eyes” of the coconut should feel dry and slightly soft. When shaken, you should be able to hear the liquid moving around on the inside. The more liquid, the fresher the coconut.
* Coconuts are in season in autumn.
* An unopened coconut can be stored in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 weeks. Coconut flesh can be stored in the refrigerator for ten days. Shredded coconut will only stay fresh for 3 days and coconut milk should be used within twenty-four hours.

1. Grape

* To know the ripeness and quality of grapes, check the skin. Grapes should be firm and plump with a deep color. The stems of grapes should be green. Brown stems mean that the grapes are not fresh. If too many grapes fall off the stalk when shaken, the bunch is likely over-ripe.
* Grapes are in season in autumn.
* Grapes will not continue ripening after picking, so be sure to choose grapes that are ripe at the grocery store. Grapes are of the highest quality when eaten soon after buying. Grapes should not be washed until they are ready to be eaten, as washing will cause them to become mushy. Grapes are also very tasty when frozen.

1. Honeydew

* To know the ripeness and quality of honeydew check the rind. Ripe honeydew will have a creamy white or pale green rind. They should also have a sweet melon aroma and should feel heavy for their size. Honeydew should be firm, but not hard, with a small amount of softness at the stem end. Ripe honeydew should also have a slightly waxy rind.
* Honeydew is in season in the summer.
* Honeydew can be stored on the counter to ripen and then in the refrigerator once ripened. Cut honeydew should be stored in the refrigerator.

1. Kiwi

* To know the ripeness and quality of a kiwi, check the firmness. Kiwi should be plump, free of soft spots, bruises, and wrinkled skin. Ripe kiwi should be soft and give in to pressure.
* Kiwi is in season in the spring.
* Kiwi will continue to ripen after it has been picked. It should be kept at room temperature to ripen and then in the refrigerator once ripe.

1. Mango

* To know the ripeness and quality of a mango, check the skin. A ripe mango should be soft to the touch and smell sweet. Sometimes the skin wrinkles when the mango is ripe.
* Mangos are in season in the spring.
* Mangos stay fresh longer in the refrigerator but will ripen faster at room temperature. The taste of a mango is best when it is cold.

1. Nectarine and Peach

* To know the ripeness and quality of a nectarine or a peach check the skin. A ripe nectarine should be smooth, bright, shiny, and unbruised. A ripe peach should be fuzzy and red or yellow. Ripe nectarines and peaches should give slightly when pushed. They will have a sweet aroma.
* Nectarines and peaches are in season in the summer.
* Nectarines and peaches will continue to ripen after they have been picked. They should be kept at room temperature to ripen and then in the refrigerator once ripe.

1. Pear

* To know the ripeness and quality of pears, check the firmness. Pears ripen from the inside out, so you can judge their ripeness by looking at the skin. However, yellowing at the base is an indication of ripeness. It is also important to note that brown or bruised skin on a pear does not always mean it has gone bad. A ripe pear is soft and has a sweet smell.
* Pears are in season in autumn.
* Pears will continue to ripen after they are picked. They should be stored on the counter to ripen. Store in the refrigerator once ripe. Once pears are ripe, they will become overly ripe fast. It is important to keep an eye on them.

1. Pineapple

* To know the ripeness of a pineapple, check the color. A ripe pineapple should be golden yellow color. The higher the yellow rises up the pineapple, the sweeter it will be. A ripe pineapple smells sweet, but if it smells old it is over ripe. A pineapple should give in only slightly when pressed. A fresh pineapple should have green leaves that cannot be easily pulled out.
* Pineapples are in season in the spring.
* Although some pineapples will ripen after they are picked, most pineapples (like those from Hawaii) are picked when they are freshest. They should be eaten shortly after purchase. Pineapples can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator.

1. Plum

* To know the ripeness and quality of a plum, check the color. Plums should have a rich color and no holes, bruises, or signs of spoiling. Ripe plums are soft to the touch and have a sweet smell.
* Plums are in season in autumn.
* Plums continue to ripen after they are picked. You should still avoid purchasing plums that are hard as they are young and will not ripen with a lot of flavors. Plums tend to ripen fast so it is good to keep an eye on them. Plums can be stored in the refrigerator once ripe.

1. Pomegranate

* To know the ripeness and quality of a pomegranate check the skin. Pomegranates are ripe when their skin is a deep color and can be easily scratched with your fingernail. A ripe pomegranate is slightly square, whereas an unripe pomegranate is round. Another sign of ripeness is when the petals on the crown of the pomegranate turn inside. The pomegranate should feel heavy for its size. You should avoid pomegranates with cracks in the skin.
* Pomegranates are in season in the winter.
* Pomegranates can be kept in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 weeks. Once they have been seeded, the seeds should be refrigerated or frozen.

1. Watermelon

* To know the ripeness and quality of a watermelon check the rind. The stripes on a ripe watermelon will fade and the entire watermelon will be an almost uniform green color. If you press on the watermelon rind and it gives, the watermelon is likely ready to eat. The bottom of the watermelon should be yellow, not white, when it is ripe. A ripe watermelon will sound hollow when thumped and an unripe watermelon will sound solid.
* Watermelon is in season in the summer.
* Uncut watermelon should be kept at room temperature. Since watermelon tastes best when it has been chilled, room temperature melons can be placed in the refrigerator before serving. Cut watermelon should be stored in the refrigerator.

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