Shopping for Vegetables

# Tips and tricks for the grocery store

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1. Asparagus

* To know the quality of asparagus, choose stalks that have tightly closed tips. Usually, thinner stalks will be less tough and stringy than thick stalks.
* Asparagus is in season in the spring.
* To store asparagus, wrap a wet paper towel around the bottom of asparagus stalks. This will help keep them fresh. Put the asparagus in a plastic bag and place it in the crisper section of the refrigerator.

1. Broccoli

* To know the quality, choose broccoli heads with tight green florets and firm stalks. The broccoli should feel heavy for its size. The cut ends of the stalks should be fresh and moist looking. Avoid broccoli with dry or browning stem ends or yellowing florets.
* Broccoli is in season in the winter.
* Store broccoli unwashed in the refrigerator in an open plastic bag for 3-5 days.

1. Brussels Sprouts

* Brussels sprouts should have very tightly packed leaves. They should also be round and heavy for their size.
* Brussels sprouts are in season in the winter.
* Store the Brussels sprouts in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

1. Cabbage

* To know the quality of cabbage, look for a firm body and crisp, richly colored leaves. Avoid cabbage with a cracked head, pale color, or wilted leaves.
* Cabbage is in season in the winter.
* Keep cabbage in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

1. Carrots

* To know the quality of carrots, look for carrots that are about ½ inch in diameter; these are young and the sweetest. Carrots should have a bright color, firm body, and smooth skin. The leaves, if attached, should be crisp and green.
* Carrots are in season in the summer.
* To store, whole carrots should be kept in a bag in the refrigerator. Cut carrots can be put in a container filled with water and kept in the refrigerator. This will help them stay fresh longer.

1. Cauliflower

* To know the quality of cauliflower, check the heads. Cauliflower heads should be compact, white, and firm with tightly clustered florets. The leaves should be bright green.
* Cauliflower is in season in autumn.
* To store cauliflower, it should be kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

1. Corn

* To know the quality of corn, check the husk. Ripe, just-picked ears of corn have a tightly attached husk that is easy to move, healthy and green. The kernels should ooze a milky liquid when stabbed. If the kernels are dry or watery, the ear is not good. The kernels should be plump and arranged in neat, tight rows that cover the full length of the ear.
* Corn is in season in autumn.
* Corn should be stored in the refrigerator crisper with the husks still on. Corn also freezes well.

1. Cucumbers

* To know the quality of cucumbers, check the body. Cucumbers should have a heavy and firm body. Small, skinny cucumbers will have firmer, sweeter flesh and softer seeds.
* Cucumbers are in season in the summer.
* Cucumbers should be kept in the refrigerator. Cucumbers can absorb the flavor of nearby foods. It is important to store cucumbers away from strong flavors, like onions.

1. Green Beans

* To know the quality of green beans, check the color. Green beans should be brightly colored and snap easily when bent. Avoid beans that have visible blemishes and are stiff.
* Green beans are in season in the summer.
* Green beans should be kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

1. Jicama

* To know the quality of jicama, check its size. Choose jicama roots that are small in size. As the root grows bigger, its flavor decreases and its texture get tougher. Jicama should have smooth, shiny, and unbruised skin. Avoid jicama with a green color around the stem end. Green is an indicator of mold.
* Jicama is in season in the summer.
* Jicama should be stored in a cool, dry place and left uncovered. Moisture can lead to rotting, so avoid putting jicama in the refrigerator. Remove any soggy or off-color flesh before use.

1. Onions

* To know the quality of onions, check the color. Green onions should have crisp, bright green tops and a firm white base. Dry onions should be firm and free of cuts and bruises.
* Onions are in season in the winter.
* To properly store onions keep them dry. Rubber bands and damaged leaves on green onions should be thrown away immediately. Green onions can be wrapped in a damp paper towel and placed in the refrigerator. Dry onions should be kept in a cool, dry, uncluttered place. Once cut, they should be stored in the refrigerator.

1. Peas

* To know the quality of peas, check the color. Peas should be plump and bright green, not white. Peas with small pods and seeds are the most tender and sweet.
* Peas are in season in the summer.
* Peas can be stored in their pods in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Peas removed from their pods can be blanched and frozen.

1. Peppers

* To know the quality of peppers, look for peppers that have firm, thick walls, smooth skin, and a bright and shiny color. The colored bell peppers such as red, yellow and orange peppers are mature and sweeter bell peppers. The green bell peppers are immature and slightly bitter.
* Peppers are in season in autumn.
* Peppers should be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper.

1. Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes

* To know the quality of potatoes, check their size. Potatoes should have a firm body and be heavy for their size. They should not have black or soft spots, sprouts, wrinkles, or greenish color.
* Potatoes are in season in the winter. Sweet potatoes are in season in autumn.
* Store potatoes in a cool, dry, uncluttered area. They should be placed in a breathable plastic or burlap bag.

1. Rhubarb

* To know the quality of rhubarb, check the stalks. Rhubarb should have firm, crisp stalks with a hint of red. The edges should not be brown or dried out. The leaves, if they’re still attached, should not be wilted.
* Rhubarb is in season in the spring.
* The leaves of the rhubarb should be removed. Wash and dry the stalks and cut off any bad parts. Wrap the stalks with a damp paper towel and place in the refrigerator.

1. Root Vegetables such as beets, parsnips, radishes, celery root, or rutabaga.

* To know the quality of root vegetables, check the size. Look for small-to-medium-sized roots; large roots are often tough and woody. Flesh should be smooth and firm. Root vegetables should have a rich color and have healthy, unwilted leaves.
* Root vegetables are in season in the winter.
* To store a root vegetable, keep in refrigerator. If the root vegetable still has leaves connected, keep them attached. Place the root in a breathable plastic bag or open plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper.

1. Salad Greens such as endive, bok choy, radicchio, spinach, or any type of lettuce.

* To know the quality of salad greens, look for healthy, dark green leaves. Smaller spinach leaves indicate a more tender and sweeter flavor. Lettuce leaves should be crisp and compact.
* Salad greens are in season in the spring.
* Store in the crisper section of the refrigerator.

1. Summer squash such as zucchini and yellow squash.

* To know the quality of summer squash, check their size. Yellow squash and zucchini are at their best when they’re about 4 inches long. They should feel firm, heavy for their size, and have bright and healthy skin. Avoid summer squash with dull or hard skin, an oversized body, soft spots or bruises.
* Summer squash is in season in the summer.
* Store summer squash in a plastic bag in the crisper section of the refrigerator.

1. Tomato

* To know the ripeness and quality of tomatoes check the skin. Since tomatoes are a fruit, they will continue to ripen after being picked. The skin of the tomato will be shiny, not matte, when it is ripe. The skin should be a deep color and be slightly soft to the touch.
* Tomatoes are in season in the summer.
* Tomatoes should be stored at room temperature. If they are kept in the refrigerator, tomatoes will not ripen properly and will become mushy.

1. Winter Greens such as kale and chard.

* To know the quality of winter greens, check the leaves. The leaves of winter greens should be firm and deeply colored with stems that are moist and strong.
* Winter greens are in season in the winter.
* Store winter greens in the refrigerator in an airtight bag. The longer winter greens are stored, the more bitter they will become.

1. Winter Squash such as butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squash.

* To know the quality of winter squash, check the skin. The skin of winter squash should be hard and rigid. The skin should be dull and rich in color without bruises, cracks, or soft spots. The stem should be dry and firm.
* Winter squash is in season in the winter.
* Store winter squash in a cool, dark, uncluttered area. Do not wrap winter squash in plastic bags.

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