

Shopping for Fruit

Tips and tricks for the grocery store Written by: Mateja Savoie Roskos and Amy Spielmaker

1 Apple

How to determine ripeness and quality? Look at the skin. Often when the skin is shiny, the apple will be juicy and crisp. Apples should be very firm and have a fresh smell. When tapped with one finger, apples should sound hollow, not flat.

When is it in season? Apples are in season in the autumn.

How to store? Apples should be kept in the refrigerator crisper.

2 Apricot

How to determine ripeness and quality? A ripe apricot will be firm to the touch, but yield when pressed. It will have a deep orange or yellow color, velvety skin, and a sweet aroma. Avoid apricots that are very soft, shriveled, or green tinged.

When is it in season? Apricots are in season in the summer.

How to store? Apricots should be ripened at room temperature. Ripe apricots can be stored in the refrigerator for 1 week (but they will not ripen in the refrigerator). Be careful with apricots as they bruise easily.

3 Avocado

How to determine ripeness and quality? A ripe avocado will be firm to the touch, but yield when pressed. An overripe avocado will feel overly soft. Additionally, avocados that feel as if the skin is disconnected from the inner flesh are likely brown or rotten on the inside.

When is it in season? Avocados are in season in the spring.

How to store? It is recommended that avocados be bought unripe and allowed to 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 consumed.

4 Banana and Plantain

How to determine ripeness and quality? 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 and prefer solid yellow bananas or those that still have tinges of green. These bananas are perfectly edible and have a less sweet taste and a firmer texture. Brown bananas are very sweet and are great for baking. Plantains are ripest and sweetest when they turn yellow-black.

When are they in season? Bananas and plantains are in season in the winter.

How to store? Bananas should be purchased while 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 so plan ahead when making a recipe calling for plantains.

5 Berries

(blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, strawberry)

How to determine ripeness and quality? Ripe berries will have a deep color and no tinges of white or green. Generally, berries 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 blemishes. There should be no juice stains on the packages as this indicates crushed, soft, or moldy fruit. Dehydrated, wrinkled fruit means that the berries have been stored too long.

When is it in season? Berries are usually in season in the spring.

How to store? Berries can be kept on the counter, but should be kept in the refrigerator to lengthen storage time. Berries should be stored unwashed until the time they are consumed.

6 Cantaloupe

How to determine ripeness and quality? Cantaloupe does not ripen after being picked so it should be purchased when it is 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, punctures, and mold. Also, the rind should be orange or golden, not green, which indicates an unripe fruit.

When is it in season? Cantaloupe is in season in the summer.

How to store? 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.

7 Cherry

How to determine ripeness and quality? Cherries should have firm and glossy skin. They should be free from blemishes and have a dark color. Bright green stems are a good indication of freshness. Overripe cherries will have wrinkled skin or brown stems.

When is it in season? Cherries are in season in the summer.

How to store? Cherries can be kept on the counter, but should be refrigerated to lengthen storage time. Cherries also freeze well.

8 Citrus fruit

(orange, grapefruit, clementine, tangerine, mandarin, lemon, lime)

How to determine ripeness and quality? Citrus fruits should be firm and heavy for their size. Avoid those with blemishes, moldy spots, or shriveled skin. Citrus fruit should have a sweet, clean fragrance. Citrus fruits are ready to be consumed when they yield when squeezed. Color is an indicator of climate, not ripeness (so oranges with tinges of green can still be ripe).

When is it in season? Citrus fruits are in season in the winter.

How to store? Citrus fruit can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator. They will ripen faster at room temperature.

9 Cranberry

How to determine ripeness and quality? 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 discolored.

When is it in season? Cranberries are in season in the autumn.

How to store? Cranberries can be stored in a bag in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. They also freeze well.

10 Coconut

How to determine ripeness and quality? 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 sloshing around on the inside. The more liquid, the fresher the coconut.

When is it in season? Coconuts are in season in the autumn.

How to store? An unopened coconut can be stored in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 weeks. Coconut flesh can be stored in the refrigerator for 10 days. Shredded coconut will only stay fresh for 3 days, and coconut milk should be consumed within 24 hours.

11 Grape

How to determine ripeness and quality? Grapes should be firm and plump with a deep color. The stems of grapes should be green. Brown stems indicate that the grapes are not fresh. If too many grapes fall off the stalk when shaken, the bunch is likely overly ripe.

When is it in season? Grapes are in season in the autumn.

How to store? Grapes will not continue ripening after picking, so be sure to select grapes that are ripe at the grocery store. Additionally, grapes are of the highest quality when consumed soon after purchasing. Grapes should not be washed until they are ready to be consumed, as washing will cause them to become mushy. Grapes are also very tasty and refreshing when frozen.

12 Honeydew

How to determine ripeness and quality? 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.

When is it in season? Honeydew is in season in the summer.

How to store? Honeydew can be stored on the counter to ripen and then in the refrigerator once ripened. Cut honeydew should be stored in the refrigerator.

13 Kiwi

How to determine ripeness and quality? Kiwi should be plump, free of soft spots, bruises, and wrinkled skin. Ripe kiwi should be soft and yield to pressure.

When is it in season? Kiwi is in season in the spring.

How to store? 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.

14 Mango

How to determine ripeness and quality? A ripe mango should be soft to the touch and smell sweet. Sometimes the skin wrinkles when the mango is ripe.

When is it in season? Mangos are in season in the spring.

How to store? Mangos stay fresh longer in the refrigerator, but will ripen faster at room temperature. The taste of a mango is best when it has been chilled.

15 Nectarine and Peach

How to determine ripeness and quality? A ripe nectarine should be smooth, bright, shiny, and unblemished. A ripe peach should be fuzzy and red or yellow. Ripe nectarines and peaches should give slightly when pushed and have a sweet aroma.

When are they in season? Nectarines and peaches are in season in the summer.

How to store? 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.

16 Pear

How to determine ripeness and quality? Pears ripen from the inside out, so you can't 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 blemished skin on a pear is not necessarily indicative of poor quality. A ripe pear is soft and has a sweet smell.

When is it in season? Pears are in season in the autumn.

How to store? Pears will continue to ripen after they are picked. They should be stored on the counter to ripen and then stored in the refrigerator once ripe. Once pears are ripe they will become overly ripe very fast so it is important to keep an eye on them.

17 Pineapple

How to determine ripeness and quality? A ripe pineapple should be a 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 fermented, it is over ripe. A pineapple should yield only slightly when pressed. A fresh pineapple should have green leaves that cannot be easily pulled out.

When is it in season? Pineapples are in season in the spring.

How to store? Although some pineapples will ripen after they are picked, most pineapples (like those from Hawaii) are picked at the height of freshness and should be consumed shortly after purchase. Pineapples can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator.

18 Plum

How to determine ripeness and quality? Plums should have a rich color and no punctures, bruises, or signs of decay. Ripe plums are soft to the touch and have a sweet smell.

When is it in season? Plums are in season in the autumn.

How to store? Plums continue to ripen after they are picked. However, you should still avoid purchasing plums that are excessively hard as they are immature and will not ripen into a flavorful plum. Plums tend to ripen quickly so it is good to keep an eye on them. Plums can be stored in the refrigerator once ripe.

19 Pomegranate

How to determine ripeness and quality? 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 and splits in the skin.

When is it in season? Pomegranates are in season in the winter.

How to store? Pomegranates can be kept in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 weeks. Once they've been seeded, the seeds should be refrigerated or frozen.

20 Watermelon

How to determine ripeness and quality? The stripes on a ripe watermelon will be faded 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.

When is it in season? Watermelons are in season in the summer.

How to store? 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.

