

# Fruits & Vegetables

## Start Fresh • Stay Safe!



**Have a plan.** Colorado produce is harvested at peak quality so most fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets should be enjoyed within a few days after purchase. Preserve excess produce by freezing, canning, or dehydrating to enjoy in the off-season.

**Be diverse.** Eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables to reap their vitamin and phytochemical benefits! This may also help limit exposure to any pesticide residues associated with a particular crop.

**Wait to wash.** Washing produce before storing may promote bacterial growth and speed up spoilage, so it is generally recommended to wait and wash fruits and vegetables just before use. If you choose to wash before storing, dry produce thoroughly with clean paper towels.

**Store safely.** Produce that requires refrigeration should be stored at 35-40°F in vegetable bins or containers on shelves above raw meats, poultry, or seafood to prevent cross contamination. Storing fresh produce in cloth produce bags or perforated plastic bags will allow air to circulate.

**Trim well.** Cut away damaged areas and remove torn outer leaves of leafy vegetables before washing.

**Start clean.** Bacteria from the outside of produce can be transferred to the interior during cutting or peeling so the best approach is to start with clean hands, cutting boards, and utensils before washing and preparing fresh produce.



### Learn more.

Visit Colorado State University Extension's **Farm to Table Colorado** website for more information on selecting, storing, and preserving fresh produce.



[farmtotable.colostate.edu](http://farmtotable.colostate.edu)

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## Guide to Washing Fruits & Vegetables

### Apples, cucumbers, and other firm produce.

Wash well under running water and scrub with a vegetable brush, including the stem area, before peeling and cutting.

**Grapes, cherries, and berries.** Store unwashed until ready to use, but discard spoiled or moldy fruit before storing to prevent the spread of spoilage organisms. Wash gently under cool running water right before use.

**Herbs.** Rinse by swishing in a bowl of clean, cool water or under running water and dry with paper towels.

**Leafy green vegetables.** Separate and individually rinse the leaves of lettuce and other greens, discarding the outer leaves if torn or bruised. Immersing leaves in a clean bowl of cool water for a few minutes helps loosen attached soil. After rinsing in a bowl or under running water, blot dry with paper towels or use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture.

**Melons.** The rough, netted surfaces of some types of melon can harbor microorganisms which transfer to the flesh during cutting. To minimize the risk of cross contamination, use a vegetable brush and wash melons thoroughly under running water before slicing or peeling. Hot water has been shown to reduce bacteria on the surface of melons.

**Mushrooms.** Refrigerate, unwashed in a paper bag. When ready to use, clean with a soft brush or wipe with a wet paper towel.

**Peppers.** Wash well under running water. When washing hot peppers, keep hands away from eyes and face; wash hands well afterwards or wear gloves.

**Peaches, plums, and other soft fruits.** Wash under running water and dry with paper towel.

**Root vegetables.** Peel potatoes, carrots, turnips, and other root vegetables, or clean them well with a firm scrub brush under running water.



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