



### Storage Tips and What to Use First

Boxes are thoughtfully put together so that things go together with a mix of items with some more perishable than others. Taking the steps to properly care for your produce and knowing what to eat first will allow you to enjoy every last bite.

#### The most important things you can do are:

1. **Unpack** your box and see what you have – ask us if you are unsure or check under This Week's Shares to see what is noted for your box this week.
2. **Prep** it- get ready to store properly, especially the berries, so they last longer.
3. **Plan** it, make sure you know what you have in your share. Review ideas on our Pinterest Boards or QuickFix or ask friends to plan what you might prepare and when. That way you can enjoy every fruit and vegetable and get the most of your box.



We want you to get the most of your box of beautiful produce.

As a general rule: **all organic produce** (aside from unripe Avocados, unripe Mangos, and Bananas) **must be immediately refrigerated.**

Avocados and Mangos can be left out several days until ripe but as soon as they are ripe must be refrigerated so watch carefully.

## Prep It!

A great step with almost all organic produce is a **bath in vinegar water** before storage. Vinegar and water is great to wash, kills bacteria, rids of buggies, and helps prolong the life of your organics.

See more about a Vinegar-Water bath and more storage tips:

Prep Dish: <http://www.prepdish.com/give-your-produce-a-vinegar-bath/>

Good Green Habits: <http://goodgreenhabits.com/cleaning-fruits-and-vegetables-organic-or-conventionally-grown/>

Life Hacker: <http://lifehacker.com/5888601/rinse-berries-in-a-vinegar-solution-to-keep-them-fresh-longer-and-mold-free>

Annie's Buying Club Produce Info, washing and Storage Tips:  
<http://www.pinterest.com/abcorganics/produce-info-washing-storage-tips/>





**Broccoli and Cauliflower** should be soaked in vinegar/water solution as well but just before preparing it. This solution helps rid organics of little buggies. Cut up as you will be preparing it. Soak for 30 minutes agitating every 5-10 minutes. If you do notice bugs, which can happen on occasion in organics, you can add ice

for the last 5-10 minutes to freeze them out, agitate, soak, and repeat. Rinse vigorously. (picture courtesy Food-From-The-Garden.com)

Always be sure to wash **Berries** once you get home in 3 parts water to 1 part vinegar. Soak for at least 15 minutes agitating every so often. Drain and rinse well. Spin dry in a salad spinner and dry carefully on towels; you need to make sure they are completely dry before storing them back in their own container that is also completely dry lined with a piece of paper or cloth towel. It's also important to open berries so



you can check and remove any that may be bad. We do not gas our berries with chlorine, common in the industry, therefore you may find one with a fuzzy beard on occasion while the rest are picture perfect. Removing that one and washing the rest as indicated above will allow you to enjoy them longer but we do still recommend eating berries first as



they are the most sensitive of the produce, particularly raspberries.

**Cherries and Grapes** do well in this vinegar-water bath as well. Always check your bag when you get home and remove any bad ones immediately before prep and storage.



All containers and packaged items should be opened once you get home. Dry any condensation built up in the inside lid and along the sides. Remember these items come off a refrigerated truck and while waiting for you to pick up, moisture can start to accumulate. Those turn into big water droplets that will fall onto the produce, particularly berries and **salads**, and causing them to go bad very quickly. Drying out the packages will allow you to enjoy these packaged items for a much longer time. This includes mushrooms, salads, sprouts, berries, prepackaged peppers, more.



Open any **bagged items** to make sure there is not any moisture in there. The adage one bad apple can spoil the bunch is true. If any potatoes, berries, pears, apples, etc. happen to be bad, remove and toss. Please send us a pic if it's significant so we can add to your next pickup. If the packaged items are wet, be sure to dry very well before storing.



Organic Yams and **Potatoes** must be refrigerated. Conventional potatoes are treated with a ton of chemicals so if you normally had bought conventional, you may think they are fine on the counter but organic potatoes will rot and sprout so be sure to refrigerate and again keep dry as wetness will cause them to go bad quickly. Again, open the bag and remove any bad ones as that will cause the entire bag to go bad. Always bring them to room temperature by leaving them on the counter several hours before preparing.



**Leafy Greens** will keep a long time if you simply trim the ends and put them in a glass of water, like you do flowers, only put them in your refrigerator. It's also a lovely welcome each time you open your fridge. If your greens are a little wilted by the time you pick up your share, remember at the stores they have them in the cold and are constantly misting them, this trick will perk them up nicely!

This works great to prolong the life of your **Herbs** as well. Snip bottoms, put in water in a glass in your refrigerator.



**Celery** should always be refrigerated. There are several ways to store it to help it last longer. Store in a bag, store submerged in water (filtered), store in your crisper drawer, or store wrapped in foil. If it is a bit wilted by the time you pick up, submerging in water will crisp them up nicely. Change the water every few days if storing submerged. Wrapping in foil and storing in the refrigerator works well once it's crisped up.

**Onions** must be dry or they will go bad. They come off a moist refrigerated truck so be sure to dry carefully before storing. Store on the counter but they do need air circulating so one of those hanging baskets is great. Do not keep in a sealed plastic bag. Be sure to check or rotate frequently especially if your home is a little more humid.





**Corn** should be left in its husk until ready to use. Only needing a quick grill or plunge into boiling water, fresh corn should always be enjoyed soon after pick up as the sugars will turn to starch over time. Sweetest soonest after harvest and some even enjoy it raw.

Be aware that organic corn is notorious for having, on occasion, a big ol' caterpillar-like wormy thing at the tip. It's not something you can miss and they are only at the top so lob that off and you're good to go. The first time you

see this it may scare the heebeegeebees out of you; it did me. Look at it as a good thing, no chemicals were used, it must be yummy, and certainly not genetically modified as they are munching away, that's for sure!

Always enjoy corn soon after receiving it as the sugars start to turn to starch once harvested - so freshest is best! Certified Organic corn is nonGMO.



**Root vegetables** with their greens still attached, like **Carrots** w/Tops and **Beets** w/Tops, should be separated before storage. The greens will continue to suck the sweetness out of the root otherwise. Then store the greens as you would any green and you can use them as you would any leafy. Store the roots in the crisper drawer on a towel to be sure they are kept free of moisture.



Lovely **Heirloom Tomatoes** arrive in a variety of sizes and colors, odd



shapes with strange unsmooth bottoms, and yet are so totally incredible! Heirlooms are REAL tomatoes and will feel super soft, even scarily mooshy, once ripe. Don't let the feel fool you, and don't let their appearance deter you. They are heavier in juiciness than the regular tomatoes that have been bred for travel so the feel which you and I have learned is a bad overripe tomato is just the sweet love of an

heirloom about to dance on your tongue. Yellow, green, red and purple, each has a unique flavor to enjoy. Slice to reveal this beauty and take your taste buds on a trip to deliciousness. Enjoy straight up or add to your sandwich, salad, omelet or oh my the options are endless! Ideally store on your counter but in South FL, the rules are different due to the humidity and they may mold so if not consuming soon, store (gasp) refrigerated and swaddle them like a baby to cushion them from the cold.



Grapes are a seasonal item so enjoy them fresh while you can! Always do a vinegar-water soak before storing but be sure they are dry before storing or they will mold. If you plan to eat them soon then wait and wash before using but the vinegar-water solution will help wash them better and help them store longer. Since they are a seasonal item, you may find you get more than you can enjoy sometimes. If you cannot keep up, soak in vinegar-water, rinse, dry carefully and freeze. No need to defrost to enjoy this sherbet-like treat any time of the year!

### **Plan:**

Take a look at what you have picked up and plan what you will want to use first. Check out recipes to figure out what you may want to prepare so you don't miss out on any of the delicious fresh produce. See what might go well together in a stir-fry, soup, side, or meal. Jot down a plan so that nothing goes to waste and you have an idea what delicious meals you can prepare this week from the box.

### **Can't use all your produce in time?**

Take a moment now to note your calendar a date certain, depending upon the perishability, that if you have not used the item, you will wash, chop, and place in your freezer for use later.

Some, like beans and broccoli, blanch first (dip into boiling water for a moment or two (less than a minute) then to ice water to stop the cooking process.

Other things like sweet potatoes and hard squash should be cooked before frozen, freeze mashed and use in baked goods or even smoothies.

Always dry produce being frozen very carefully to avoid ice crystals. Try a salad spinner and towels.

Taking a little prep time now before storage or if you cannot use in time, before it goes bad, will save you money and allow you to enjoy every last bite of your delicious box of produce!

## What to use first and How to Store It:

The humidity and condensation in your refrigerator (how often it is opened too) will play a key role in how long your beautiful produce will last for you. Make sure to enjoy the more perishable items first and take the time to store them properly for your best value.

Perishable items to enjoy soon after pickup in order of most perishable:

- **Mushrooms** – very perishable, must be refrigerated and used within 3 days
- **Berries / Grapes** – Aside from the vinegar wash where you dry very carefully before storage, do not wash until ready to use. Never store berries wet and never leave them out of refrigeration. All berries must be promptly refrigerated. Raspberries are more sensitive than Strawberries which are more sensitive than Blackberries which are more sensitive than Blueberries. They can last up to a week especially if you do the vinegar/water wash but we say enjoy within 3-4 days.
- **Cherries** - Cherries are quite sensitive to time and moisture so should be rinsed in vinegar/water as indicated for berries and dried carefully before storing in your refrigerator. Enjoy soon after pick up. They can last up to a week especially if you do the vinegar/water wash but we say enjoy within 3-4 days or freeze after pitting.
- **Cucumbers** – are very sensitive and must be eaten soon after pickup, also great to be juiced, they will go bad quickly if any moisture gets to them so be sure they are in a dry part of your refrigerator. Cucumbers enjoy within 3-4 days though they may last over a week if stored properly during strong seasons.
- **Corn** – though it may hold longer, you always want to enjoy as soon after harvest as possible for the sweetest possible corn or do a blanch and freeze for later.
- **Salads/ Baby Spinach / Spinach bunches** – unlike other leafies which will last a little longer, spinach bunches are very sensitive and need to be used soon after pick up. Baby Spinach and Salads that are packaged come with a date and will last even past that if you take the steps noted earlier on drying out the containers.



- **Snow Peas / Green Beans / Sugar Snap Peas**– keep in a container or bag in your fridge and make sure they are kept dry. If the bag or container is sealed, moisture may trap inside causing them to go bad quickly. If they are in a brown bag, note it on the bag or you may forget and miss out on using them. Yellow Beans are more sensitive than Green Beans which are more sensitive than Sugar Snaps and Snow Peas. Can't use them in time? Make a note on your calendar that if you have not used them by that date (let's say 4 days after pick up) that you wash, blanch, dry, and freeze them in a sealed container for a beautiful stir-fry or to add to a stew or soup later on. We suggest enjoying within 3-5 days after pickup.
- **Eggplant** – refrigerate and don't forget to use soon after pickup - VERY versatile! May last up to a week but don't wait, enjoy within 3 days of pick up to maximize the freshness.
- **Tomatoes** – Store on counter is best however many areas in south FL are simply too humid and they may mold on the counter so against best judgment, refrigerate to store longer but keep in a towel and away from the direct cool air flow. Heirloom Tomatoes can be on the counter but eat within a day or so and watch carefully as they will mold if your home is too humid. We suggest they be refrigerated and maybe taken out several hours before enjoying. If Mini Heirlooms or Cherry/Grape tomatoes are hard and green leave on a towel on the counter until ripe but check regularly to make sure not molding and keep home cool.
- **Sprouts** – keep refrigerated in their container, they should be dated
- **Broccoli / Broccolini / Cauliflower** – refrigerate like Broccoli; is more sensitive than Broccoli, store in bag or in crisper drawer. Broccoli and Broccolini will last a week maybe more but Cauliflower probably 5-7 days.
- **Herbs** – snip bottoms and put in water like flowers in a vase in the fridge
- **Peaches / Plums / Nectarines / Pluots (summer stone fruit)** – tend to be more sensitive than other fruits but may hold well in the refrigerator as long as they are kept dry and do not get wet. If not yet ripe, leave on the counter one day but watch carefully, they will mold and may wrinkle so only one day. They will ripen more slowly in the fridge.



Mid-perishable –if stored properly may hold 4-5 days, plan to use and enjoy:

- **Artichokes** – store refrigerated in the crisper if possible and use within 5 days.
- **Leafy Greens** – if stored properly will hold at least a week, sometimes longer however, plan to use fairly soon after pickup as they are sensitive. Lettuce should also be enjoyed but also does keep well if stored properly. To store: unwashed in a “green” bag or wrapped in a damp towel in your crisper drawer. Best yet, trim the ends and store in water (like a vase of flowers) in the refrigerator – they will stay crisp and green longest that way. Will last a week maybe more if stored this way.
- **Peppers** – Sweet Mini Peppers will hold well in their container as long as it’s dry and tend to last about a week. Green, Red, Yellow and Orange Bell Peppers will hold well in the crisper but must be kept dry. Yellow are more sensitive than Orange which are more sensitive than Green and Red. Jalapenos store well. Can’t use them in time? Mark your calendar a week after pick up to wash, slice and freeze for use later in a stir-fry, soup, sauce, frittata, or stew. May last up to two weeks but enjoy them within one to maximize freshness and flavor.
- **Lettuces** – store in a bag in your refrigerator. Sometimes you will see some brown scarring on the leaves or wind damage where the membrane of the leaf may pull off, this is normal and not an indication of a quality concern but rather of a weather issue during it’s time growing. Normally last a week or more if stored properly.
- **Zucchini** – keep refrigerated, should hold a week or longer, crisper drawer is ideal, may last even two weeks if kept dry but we say use within 8-10 days.

What will hold a bit longer however if your fridge has a lot of moisture (condensation or gets opened and closed a lot, that will shorten the life)

- **Bananas / Onions / Plantains** – on the counter with air circulating so hanging basket is best for storage. Plantains can be used at varying stages from green to black. Be sure to peel and freeze your bananas for smoothies if you cannot enjoy in time.
- **Melons** – must be refrigerated and enjoyed within a week
- **Pineapple** – keep refrigerated a week or more to get juicier, can be left on the counter but on its side not end or the end will mold from the trapped moisture and we do not rec leaving on counter if you are in south FL due to the humidity. Will hold two weeks if refrigerated.
- **Mangos** – on the counter until ripe then promptly eat or refrigerate. They will give under gentle thumb pressure once ripe but Ataulfo Mangos skin will turn GOLDEN when ripe, so wait for that, otherwise they will be quite tart.
- **Avocados** – counter a day or two until ripe then get these into your belly. You can refrigerate several days but don't forget about them or they will turn dark inside, not good eats.
- **Oranges/ Citrus** – keep refrigerated – more perishable than apples/pears but will hold for a week to three weeks if stored properly. May hold several weeks refrigerated.
- **Apples, Pears** – all good if stored in your refrigerator and kept dry. May hold several weeks refrigerated.
- **Carrots / Beets** – store on a towel in the crisper drawer being sure they are kept free of moisture. Carrots must be stored in a sealed container or bag or they will get limp. May hold several weeks refrigerated.
- **Ginger** – will store a while in your refrigerator if kept dry but if you get a nice piece, we suggest you scrape off the skin and keep in your freezer. It can be grated easily into stir-fries, soups or even juiced frozen so no need to defrost and that way you have “fresh” ginger on hand!
- **Potatoes/ Yams/ Sweet Potatoes** – organic potatoes must be refrigerated, bring to room temp before cooking. May hold several weeks if refrigerated.
- **Hard Squash** – store on the counter or a cool dry place. Will hold several weeks as long as your home is not too humid. If you want to last longer, store refrigerated but wipe down if they get moisture/condensation built-up.