

Fruits & Veggies Storage 101

For Best Flavor & Peak Nutrition

by Marilyn Mills, MS, RD, LD, CDE

Did you know that bananas have to have their own storage space to avoid ripening every other vegetable near them? Should you ripen avocados in the fridge? If you're making pesto, why isn't basil with the other refrigerated herbs?

My role as a supermarket dietitian is more than nutrition education teaching about portion size of fruits and veggies, reading labels for vitamin content and pointing out the benefits of phytonutrients. I have found out while many customers spend a lot of time in the fresh produce aisles carefully shopping for fruits and vegetables – a big cheer for nutrition! – they may be misinformed about proper storage for different fruits and vegetables to keep the nutrition and best flavor. So now on my tours, I include some questions about fruit and vegetable storage and washing.

Test your produce manager skills: Which ones should you ripen on the counter first, then refrigerate? Is it avocado, nectarines or berries? Use this guide to find the best answer.

STORE IN THE FRIDGE

FRUIT	VEGETABLES & HERBS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples (more than 7 days) • Apricots • Asian pears • Berries • Cherries • Cut Fruit • Grapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artichokes • Asparagus • Green Beans • Beets • Broccoli • Brussel Sprouts • Cabbage • Carrots • Cauliflower • Celery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut Vegetables • Green Onions (scallions) • Herbs (not basil) • Leafy Vegetables • Leeks • Lettuce • Mushrooms • Peas

1. Place fruits and vegetables in separate, perforated plastic bags.
2. Use within 1-3 days for maximum flavor and freshness.
3. Store each group in different produce drawers in the refrigerator to minimize the powerful ripening effects of ethylene produced by the fruits on the vegetables.

RIPEN ON COUNTER, THEN REFRIGERATE

FRUIT	VEGETABLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiwi • Nectarines • Peaches • Pears • Plums • Plumcots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avocados

1. To prevent moisture loss, store fruits and vegetables separately in a paper bag, perforated plastic bag, or ripening bowl on the counter away from sunlight. Ripening fruit in a bowl or paper bag can be enhanced by placing an apple with the fruit to be ripened.
2. After ripening, store in refrigerator and use within 1 to 3 days.

STORE ONLY AT ROOM TEMPERATURE

FRUIT	VEGETABLES & HERBS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples (fewer than 7 days) • Pomegranates • Bananas • Plantain • Pineapple • Citrus fruits • Mangoes • Papayas • Melons • Tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basil (in water) • Cucumber† • Eggplant† • Garlic* • Ginger • Jicama • Onions* • Peppers† • Potatoes* • Pumpkins • Sweet Potatoes* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radishes • Spinach • Sprouts • Summer Squashes • Sweet Corn

1. Many fruits and vegetables should only be stored at room temperatures. Refrigeration can cause cold damage or prevent them from ripening to good flavor and texture. For example, pink tomatoes ripen to a better taste and red color if they are left at room temperature. In the refrigerator, they do not turn red, and even red tomatoes kept in the refrigerator lose their flavor.
2. Keep away from direct sunlight.

† Cucumbers, eggplant, and peppers can be refrigerated for 1 to 3 days, use soon after removing from the refrigerator.

* Store garlic, onions, potatoes, and sweet potatoes in a well-ventilated area in the pantry.

Adapted from Produce for Better Health Foundation and UC Davis Postharvest Technology

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Dessert in 20 minutes!

Berry Delicious Summer Time Fruit Trifle

Prep Time 20 Minutes

3 containers (6 oz each) Stonyfield® or your favorite brand fat free lemon yogurt

2 cups Cabot whipped low fat whipped topping

3 containers (6 oz each) your favorite brand low fat blackberry yogurt

8 cups cubed (1-inch) angel food cake (10- to 12-oz cake)

4 cups fresh blackberries

2 tablespoons fresh grated lemon peel

- In medium bowl, lightly fold lemon yogurt with 1 cup of the whipped cream topping. In another medium bowl, lightly fold blackberry yogurt with remaining 1 cup whipped topping; set aside.
- In 2- to 3-quart trifle bowl or clear glass bowl, arrange half of the cake cubes. Top with 2 cups of the blackberries. Top with blackberry yogurt mixture. Arrange remaining cake cubes over yogurt. Top with remaining blackberries. Spoon lemon yogurt mixture over berries. Sprinkle with lemon peel.
- Refrigerate until ready to serve in less than 30 minutes. Cover and refrigerate any remaining trifle.

Makes 20 servings

