

Fresh Vegetable Guide



Eat your vegetables!

It's true what they say about vegetables—they are excellent sources of vitamins A and C, folic acid, and other nutrients, such as fiber and potassium.

Research shows that eating vegetables can lower the risk of some chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, diverticulosis, type 2 diabetes, cataracts, macular degeneration, and certain types of cancer.

Eating a variety of vegetables of different colors—dark-green leafy products, such as fresh spinach or spring salad mix; yellow or red squash and tomatoes; and even purple eggplant or kale—increases the mix of vitamins and minerals in your diet, and can lead to a healthier you!



Buy local

For best quality, buy vegetables during primary growing seasons.

April: asparagus, radish

May: asparagus, green onions, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, peas, radish, spinach, turnips

June: asparagus, beets, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, collards, green onions, kale

July: beets, bok choy, cabbage, chard, cucumber, new potatoes, snap beans, summer squash, sweet corn, tomatoes

August: beets, bok choy, carrots, chard, collards, cucumber, eggplant, kale, lima beans, muskmelon, onions, peppers, snap beans, summer squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, watermelon

September: beets, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, cucumber, eggplant, garlic, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, lima beans, muskmelon, onions, peas, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, radish, snap beans, spinach, summer squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, turnips, watermelon, winter squash

October: beets, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chard, cucumber, eggplant, garlic, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, onions, peas, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, radish, snap beans, spinach, summer squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, turnips, winter squash



Wash them first

Raw produce can carry bacteria or viruses that will make you sick. The bacteria can come from the soil, people who handle the produce, or from the knives and cutting boards in your home.

Follow these steps to prepare fresh vegetables:

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water before starting to prepare any food item.
2. Use clean cutting boards, knives, and other equipment. If it is necessary to use the same equipment with raw meat, poultry, or fish, be sure to wash with hot, sudsy water before using for vegetable preparation.
3. It is best to wash most produce just before using.
4. Wash all produce, even if you plan to peel it. (Bacteria on the surface can be transferred to the edible portion inside.)
5. Wash produce under running water. Soap or produce rinses are not necessary. Use a scrub brush on firm vegetables. Lettuce, spinach, kale, and chard may need to be rinsed several times to remove soil or sand.
6. Dry vegetables with clean paper towels, or let air dry on a rack set over a pan.
7. Store washed salad greens in clean, clear plastic bags or clean containers.

Resources

AnswerLine—www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline

Extension Store—store.extension.iastate.edu

Iowa Farmers Markets Directory—www.idalsdata.org/fmnp

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VEGETABLE	LOOK FOR ...	STORAGE TIPS
Asparagus*	Firm, plump, straight spears with compact tips; medium green color with purple tinge; (white stalks are often tough)	Wrap cut ends in damp paper towel; put in plastic bag; store in refrigerator crisper up to 4 days
Beans (snap)*	Tender, crisp, well-shaped, smooth, velvety skin	Store in plastic bag for 4 or 5 days
Beets*	Smooth, hard, round, deep color; smaller size usually more tender	Cut off greens before storing in refrigerator up to 2 weeks
Bell peppers*	Firm, bright color, heavy for their size; no brown or soft spots	Store 3 to 4 days in refrigerator
Bok choy*	Thick, fleshy, firm stalks with bright-colored whole green leaves	Store in plastic bag in refrigerator for 1 to 2 days
Broccoli*	Dark green to purple buds, tightly closed, with firm stems; avoid heads with yellowing	Store in plastic bag in crisper drawer for 3 to 5 days
Brussels sprouts*	Firm, compact, bright green, heavy for size	Store in refrigerator for 3 to 5 days
Cabbage*	Crisp, firmly packed head that is heavy for its size and does not smell too strong	Tightly wrap in plastic and refrigerate; flavor and odor increases with storage
Carrots*	Firm, bright orange color, smooth, well-shaped	Keep in plastic bag in refrigerator up to 2 weeks
Cauliflower*	Firm, compact, creamy-white heads with florets tightly pressed together; avoid heads with brown spots on florets	Keep in plastic bag in refrigerator about 1 week
Chili peppers	Firm, plump, shiny skinned, with fresh smell; no soft or brown spots	Refrigerate in plastic bag up to 7 days
Cucumber	Firm, deep green color, well-shaped, small to medium in size; no soft or yellow spots	Refrigerate up to 1 week
Eggplant*	Firm, shiny skin, heavy for size, green stems; no soft spots or wrinkled skin	Keeps in refrigerator up to 4 days
Greens* (<i>chard/collard/kale/mustard</i>)	Deep green color; fresh, plump, crisp leaves; no thick stems or strong odor	Refrigerate in plastic bag for 3 to 5 days
Kohlrabi	Small, smooth bulb-stems, firm green leaves	Remove leaves; store in refrigerator for several weeks
Leaf lettuce* (<i>romaine, butterhead</i>)	Bright color, crisp leaves; no decay or browning	Store whole heads in plastic bag for 3 to 5 days
Onions (<i>green</i>)	White bulb and crisp green tops	Store in refrigerator for 3 to 4 days
Onions (<i>red, white, yellow</i>)	Blemish-free, dry, shiny, firm, tightly closed neck	Store in loosely woven bag, in a cool, dark, dry area
Peas*	Bright green pods filled with pearl-shaped peas	Store in plastic bag in refrigerator for 3 to 4 days
Potatoes*	Firm and smooth, few eyes, blemish-free; no sprouts, soft spots, or green coloring	Store in cool, dry place for 2 weeks; cut out any green areas and trim any sprouts before using
Pumpkin*	Rock-solid, firm, full stem, matte skin	Store in cool, dry place; thick-skinned keeps longer than thin-skinned
Spinach*	Deep green-colored, crisp leaves	Refrigerate in plastic bag for 2 to 3 days
Summer squash* (<i>patty pan, zucchini</i>)	Small to medium size, shiny skin, solid flesh	Refrigerate in plastic bag for 2 to 3 days
Sweet corn	Bright green, snug-fitting husk; evenly spaced, plump kernels visible when husk peeled back	Refrigerate in tightly wrapped plastic bag for 1 to 2 days
Tomatillos*	Shiny, firm, dry, with snug husks, green color	Refrigerate unhusked in paper bag up to 1 month
Tomatoes*	Firm, fully colored, plump, green stems; no brown spots	Place stem-side down at room temperature; refrigerating causes flavor loss
Winter squash* (<i>acorn, butternut</i>)	Rock-solid, firm, full stem, matte skin, heavy for size; no soft spots or bruises	Store in cool, dry place; thick-skinned will keep longer than thin-skinned

*These foods are rich sources of vitamins A and/or C and/or folic acid (folate) and/or potassium.