

Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide



Why store correctly?

In NSW the average household wastes over \$600 worth of food in one year. To avoid unnecessary waste in your home it's important to store your fruit and vegetables correctly and understand the individual needs of your fresh produce. Following a few simple guidelines will ensure you increase shelf life while maintaining the flavour, texture and nutrients of fresh produce.

After harvesting, all fruits and vegetables give off a natural ripening hormone called ethylene, with some producing it in greater quantities than others. When ethylene-producing items are kept in close proximity with ethylene-sensitive items, the hormone will speed up the ripening process of all items. You can use this to your advantage by placing a ripe banana, which is a high ethylene producer, in a paper bag with an unripe avocado. Although if high ethylene producing foods are not managed it can lead to the premature deterioration of ethylene sensitive fruit & vegetables.

How to store correctly.

There are many factors to consider when storing your produce such as temperature, light, moisture and air circulation. If you follow some simple rules you'll be able to enjoy your produce at it's best for longer and reduces waste.

- Store fruit and vegetables separately as fruit in general produce more ethylene than veggies.
- Do not wash produce until you're ready to eat.
- Remove green tops of root vegetable and store the edible tops such as beetroot and turnip leaves separately to the root.
- Unripe fruit should be kept at a cool room temperature until ripe and then refrigerated.
- Refrigerating fruit will slow down the ripening process and reduce sweetness.
- Damage such as bruises and cuts to fruit will increase its ethylene production. Remove any damaged items so as to not infect others and consume as soon as possible.
- Once any produce is prepared and sliced it should be stored in the fridge in a ventilated container.
- Store corn with husk on if possible.
- Mushrooms are best stored in a paper bag in fridge to prevent sweating.
- Asparagus is best stored in a glass of water in the fridge with the tough part of the stalks removed. Herbs also do well stored this way.
- Do not overcrowd your produce.

How to plan your meals.

As a general rule, leafy vegetables and herbs should be eaten within the first day or two of receipt as they begin to deteriorate and lose sweetness, becoming increasingly bitter after harvest. These vegetables are most sensitive to ethylene and are especially at risk. The best way to store these is in a sealed container in the fridge preferably kept moist. Damp paper towel or a tea towel works well to keep humidity high.

To ensure freshness, veggies such as zucchinis, beans, broccoli and leeks will remain fresh for a few days so are best planned for midweek meals. Store these in a ventilated container in the fridge. Ground veggies like onions, potatoes and pumpkin will retain their nutrients longer and won't deteriorate rapidly so can be stored for much longer in a dark well ventilated pantry.

Refrigerator

The temperature of your fridge should be 2-5 degrees celsius for optimal produce storage. Remember to separate ethylene sensitive items from ethylene producing items for longer shelf life i.e. keep items coded **green** away from items coded **orange**.

Open Shelf	Ventilated Container				Keep Moist
Apples	Artichoke	Beans	Beetroot	Berries	Asparagus
Capsicum	Broccoli	Brussel Sprouts	Cabbage	Cauliflower	Bok Choy/ Pak Choy
Cherries	Carrots	Celery	Celeriac	Corn	Chervil/Basil
Chillies	Cucumber	Eggplant	Fennel	Kohlrabi	Coriander
Citrus	Leeks	Mushrooms	Parsnip	Peas	Mint/Parsley
Figs	Radish	Rhubarb	Rosemary	Sage	Salad Greens
Grapes	Salad Sprouts	Snow Peas	Spring Onion	Squash	Spinach/Kale
Okra	Swede	Turnips	Zucchini	Zucchini Flowers	Watercress/ Endive

Countertop

Many fruits can be stored in a cool well ventilated place that's out of direct sunlight direct on your counter. This is a perfect place to ripen fruit. To maximize shelf life or ripen fruit faster, experiment by mixing it up and partnering certain items together.




Avocados	Bananas	Guava
Jackfruit	Kiwifruit	Lychee
Mango	Melons	Papaya / Pawpaw
Passionfruit	Pear	Persimmon
Pineapple	Pomegranate	Quince
Starfruit	Stonefruit	Tomatoes

Pantry

Perfect pantry conditions are dark and well ventilated with an average temperature between 5-15 degrees celsius. Produce should be stored to encourage air circulation i.e. baskets, wire containers or paper bags. Vegetables with strong odours such as onions and garlic should be kept separate from crops like potatoes so as not to transfer the smell and the taste.

Galangal	Garlic	Potato/Taro
Ginger	Onions/Eschallots	Sweet Potato/Pumpkin

Key:

	Does not produce ethylene & not sensitive to ethylene
	Does not produce ethylene but is sensitive to ethylene
	Produces ethylene and is sensitive to ethylene

