



**RENEGADE
GOURMET**

COOKING

&

**KITCHEN
TIPS**

HANDLING FRESH PRODUCE

Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. If buying fresh cut produce, be sure it is refrigerated or surrounded by ice.

After purchase, put produce that needs refrigeration away promptly. Fresh produce should be refrigerated within two hours of peeling or cutting.

Leftover cut produce should be discarded if left at room temperature for more than two hours.

Wash hands often. Hands should be washed with hot soapy water before and after handling fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood, as well as after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.

Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables with cool tap water immediately before eating. Don't use soap or detergents. Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush. Cut away any bruised or damaged areas before eating.

Wash surfaces often. Cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops should be washed with hot soapy water and sanitized after coming in contact with fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Sanitize after use with a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water.

Use clean cutting boards and utensils when handling fresh produce. If possible, use one clean cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.

Use a cooler with ice or use ice gel packs when transporting or storing perishable food outdoors, including cut fresh fruits and vegetables.





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MORE PRODUCE TIPS

Keep strawberries fresh for several days by refrigerating them, unwashed, in an airtight container between layers of paper towels.

When adding whole cherry or grape tomatoes to a marinated salad, first carefully pierce them with the tines of a fork. They'll be more flavorful because they can absorb the marinade better.

Save those thin white plastic bags you brought ice cream home in! Once the bananas have reached the "perfect" ripeness, place them in one of those white plastic bags and store in the refrigerator. They will remain "firm textured" and retain their bright yellow color for up to a week.

Banana's past their prime? Then peel, slice or leave whole and freeze in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Once frozen, place bananas in a plastic freezer zipper bag. Use thawed in any recipe calling for mashed bananas.

Freeze whole strawberries, peach and banana slices on a cookie sheet. Once frozen, store in a plastic zipper bag in the freezer. Great for use in beverages such as fruit smoothies.

You'll get superb flavor as well as protection from discoloration if you sprinkle avocado with fresh lime juice instead of lemon juice.

To ripen green pears, place 2 or 3 in a brown bag, loosely closed, and store at room temperature out of direct sunlight.

To ripen a tomato fast, put it with an apple in a perforated bag or a covered bowl. The apple gives off ethylene gas that speeds the ripening process.





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To keep cut apple slices from turning brown, sprinkle them with a little lemon juice or other citrus fruit. Great idea for kid's school lunches!

Don't refrigerate those tomatoes you just purchased at the local market! Instead, store them stem-side down in a basket or bowl on your kitchen counter or table and they will continue to ripen, improving their flavor and texture. Refrigerate after desired ripeness is reached.

Don't squeeze fresh tomatoes to remove the seeds because it makes them mushy. Instead, scoop the seeds out with a teaspoon or very clean fingers!

To keep cauliflower snowy as it cooks, add 2 tablespoons lemon juice or white vinegar to the cooking water.

As a rule, flat-leafed parsley is best for cooking. Curly-leaf parsley is best for garnishing.

When boiling corn on the cob, add a pinch of sugar to help bring out the corn's natural sweetness! (Remember not to overcook, which can toughen the kernels. About 3 minutes is all it takes.)

To quickly and easily remove the core from ice burg lettuce, firmly smack lettuce core-side down on the kitchen counter top and simply twist the core out!

Find a good buy on sweet or bell peppers, then find you don't have the time to prepare them before they go "bad"? Don't let them go to waste. Seed and chop those peppers and toss them in a freezer bag. Next time a recipe calls for chopped bell pepper, just grab what you need out of the bag.

When purchasing fresh mushrooms, always use a brown paper bag to hold them instead of a plastic bag. Store unwashed mushrooms in the paper bag in your refrigerator's vegetable drawer. They will retain freshness twice as long than if stored in a plastic bag.





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There's more than one way to get the most juice from a lemon or lime. Roll them under the palm of your hand on the counter, heat for a few seconds in the microwave are two. The best way I have found is to simply cut the fruit in half and using the tines of a dinner fork, ream the inside while squeezing. You will be amazed at the amount of juice you get with very little work.

To peel garlic easily, you have several choices. One is to place a large butcher-type knife (flat side of blade down) on top of the clove and then whack the flat surface of blade as hard as you can. Not only does the peel release but you have partially crushed the clove. You can microwave the cloves for a few seconds until the peel is loose. Another method is the rubber tube product that can be purchased almost anywhere and is very inexpensive. You can put several cloves of similar size in at one time, roll with the palm of your hand, and the peels are off. A garlic crusher will remove the peel, but is messy and you will always lose a bit of the garlic that becomes trapped in the Contraption!

Store lemon, orange and grapefruit rinds in the freezer; grate as needed for pies, cakes and cookies.

Corn, beans, peas and other vegetables will lose sweetness as sugar in their tissues turns to starch. Store dry and unwashed in plastic bags in the refrigerator.

Winter squash is mature when you cannot pierce the skin with your thumbnail. If the squash has a soft skin, it means the squash is old and past its peak.

Cutting salad greens with a knife may cause discoloration and bruising. Gently tearing the leaves is better and makes a more attractive salad.





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To prevent wilting and flavor change, rinse green, leafy vegetables under cool water, and drain thoroughly. Wrap in paper towels, place in plastic bags, and store the vegetable bin of the refrigerator.

Before chopping onions in the food processor, peel and quarter them and freeze for 30 minutes. This will minimize both mushiness and tears.

If you add a little vinegar to the water when boiling peeled potatoes, it causes them to form a light crust that helps hold their shape when combined with other foods - an added plus when making potato salad.

Tomatoes shouldn't be cooked at a rolling boil because they can turn acidic. For sweet and mellow tomatoes or sauce, simmer slowly, no additional sugar is Needed.

To test the freshness of corn at the market, pop a kernel with your fingernail. If the milk is watery, then the corn is immature. If it is thick and starchy, the corn is old.

Always use canned, not fresh, pineapple in gelatin salads. A natural enzyme in the fresh fruit will prevent the gelatin from setting.

