Produce Handling Guide

While we can’t control the seasons or changing weather patterns that affect fruit and vegetable quality, there are many variables you can control to maximize your freshness and yields.

**TEMPERATURE**

Temperature is the defining factor in maintaining and maximizing your produce quality. Temperature abuse is the leading cause of produce claims and losses. Always be aware of temperatures in receiving, storage, and prep areas to effectively manage optimal produce life.

**ROTATION**

Proper rotation is as easy as writing delivery dates on products and storing in order so that the oldest product is always used first. This is called the FIFO method.

**FIRST IN – FIRST OUT**

**IDEAL STORAGE TEMPERATURES**

- **FRONT - 45 - 50 F**
  - Apples
  - Basil
  - Beets
  - Cabbage
  - Cantaloupe
  - Carrots
  - Celery
  - Cucumbers
  - Eggplant
  - Garlic
  - Honeydews
  - Jicama
  - Limes
  - Okra
  - Pears
  - Peppers
  - Pineapples
  - Plums
  - Radishes
  - Yellow Squash
  - Zucchini

- **MIDDLE - 40 - 45 F**
  - Artichokes
  - Asparagus
  - Beets
  - Cauliflower
  - Cherries
  - Cocos
  - Corn
  - Green Beans
  - Grapes
  - Green Onions
  - Green Peppers
  - Tomatoes
  - Kiwi Fruit
  - Mushrooms
  - Parsley
  - Pear Snow
  - Sugar, Green
  - Turnips
  - Watercress
  - Watermelon

- **BACK - 34 - 40 F**
  - Alfalfa Sprouts
  - Bean Sprouts
  - Broccoli
  - Celery
  - Corn
  - Dairy Products
  - Fresh-Cut Fruits & Vegetables
  - Fresh-Cut Salads
  - Greens, Kale, Collards
  - Endiv, Chard, etc.
  - Herbs
  - Kale
  - Leek Leaks
  - Lettuce
  - Spinach
  - Romaine

* Store as far away from light as possible, usually on a lower shelf

**FRESH FRUIT RIPENING GUIDE**

Some fresh fruit continues to ripen after harvest while others do not. Whether or not a fruit continues to ripen is a key factor in determining its storage and shelf life. Fruits that require additional ripening should be stored at room temperature until ripe. Fruit that does not ripen after harvesting should be stored in a cool area until used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRUIT THAT RIPENS AFTER HARVEST</th>
<th>FRUIT THAT DOES NOT RIPEN AFTER HARVEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>Apples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwi</td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nectarines</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oranges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watermelon (whole)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**HANDLING OVERVIEW**

**Temperature:**

Temperature fluctuates from front to back of the cooler, this is due to the location of the cooling unit and the frequency of the door being opened. The area closest to the door will generally be the warmest.

**Fresh-Cut Produce:**

- Store at 34°F or higher, reduces shelf life
- Maximize shelf life with proper refrigeration
- Keep time out of refrigeration to a minimum
- Store product in original bags or shipping cartons

**Tomatoes:**

Should be held at room temperature to ripen and then used immediately. Be careful not to over-bury if you refrigerate a ripe tomato, it loses flavor.

**Best Kept in Dry Storage**

- Avocados (unripe)
- Bananas
- Mangos
- Onions
- Papayas
- Pears (unripe)
- Plantains
- Potatoes
- Pumpkins
- Shallots
- Squash (Hard, butternut, etc.)
- Tomatoes (ripe)
- Watermelon (whole)