

MODULE 2: SHOPPING & STORAGE | TRANSCRIPT

LESSON 7

Fridge Storage

As you now know, cold temps slow the maturation process for fruits and vegetables, so refrigeration is a great way to extend shelf life. If certain fruits and veggies are ripening too fast on the counter, or have reached ripeness, move them to the fridge (but keep them away from ethylene-sensitive foods) to get a few more days out of them.

Now, let's talk about the fruits and veggies that should always be stored in the refrigerator. Remember that this and more info is always available in the Ingredient Index (you can access it on your phone while you're at the store you know):

Asparagus

Select firm, straight, bright green stalks with tightly closed tips. Stems should be smooth— ridges and wrinkles indicate old age. Also, the more uniform the size of the stalks, the more control we have with cooking times, so keep that in mind when making selections. To store, evenly slice off about ¼" from the bundled bottom ends and place that bundle upright in a sturdy glass or ramekin (small dish used for baking and serving a single portion of food) filled with about ½" water and they'll keep for 5–7 days.

Beets

Select small- to medium-sized firm beets with the tapered root at the bottom (aka the "taproot") intact. Large beets with hairy taproots indicate a woodier, tougher texture and earthier flavor than small to medium beets. If the beet greens are still attached (which is the best way to tell if beets are fresh), they should be bright green with no signs of wilting. When you get home, trim greens 2–3" from beet and save them for salads, smoothies, sautés (amazing with garlic and lemon), or homemade veggie stock. If you leave the greens on the beets when storing, they can sap moisture from the beetroot. The crisper drawer is the best place for beets either wrapped in a bag or free to roll around for 7–10 days.

Give freshly removed beet greens a cut at the bottom of the stalks and either store them in a glass of water in the fridge (like a flower arrangement) for 1–2 days or wrap them in a clean kitchen towel and store in the crisper for 5–7 days.

You can also blanch and chop the greens to freeze for future meals. We'll go over blanching soon, but once blanched, gently roll greens in a clean towel to dry completely. Then, pack into freezer-safe containers and bags to store for up to 2 months. Make sure you press out any excess air and the greens are dry. This keeps freezer burn at bay.

Berries

When shopping for berries like blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, or blackberries, look for plump, bright fruit. Always check the bottom of the container they come in—you want to see firm, berries, not soggy, mushy, or moldy ones. When you get home, remove any sad ones that snuck by inspection and store the rest in the fridge in their container for 3–7 days. To extend shelf life, maintain plumpness, and keep mold away, you can create a simple vinegar soak for the berries before storing. It doesn't affect their flavor at all and works like a charm.

Mix 2 cups of water with 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar in a bowl, then transfer berries gently to the mixture to soak for 1–2 minutes. Gently drain berries, rinse if you like but it's not necessary, and dry them gently by layering on a clean dish towel. Once dry, place them back into their container in the fridge for 7–10 days. You'll be amazed at how long they can stay plump and mold-free using this trick. Game changer.

Broccoli & Cauliflower

When buying heads of broccoli look for tight green florets and firm stalks—no dried, browning stems or yellowing on florets. With cauliflower, you can find green, white, gold, or purple varieties—look for tight florets and firm stalks without dried, brown or discolored spots. Broccoli and cauliflower bundles should feel dense and heavy for their size. If, back home, you see that a few dark spots slipped by your cauliflower inspection, just trim them off. Store in the crisper in an open container or paper bag.

If buying pre-cut florets, make sure they're crisp, bright, and green with no soginess, wilting or discoloration. If they're in a bag, make sure there isn't any condensation collecting inside the bag or the smell when you open it may knock you over. No bueno. Condensation-free? Get them out of the plastic bag and into a dry paper bag or glass container when you get home so they don't get moldy. If they're starting to wilt in the fridge at all, make a fresh cut on the bottom of the stalk and place in a glass of water for 5–10 minutes—they should perk right up. Both keep in the fridge for about 7–10 days.

Brussels Sprouts

If bought on the stalk, leave them on the stalk until ready to cook. If bought loose, store them in a sealed container or bag for 3–7 days. Either way, sprouts should be firm, tight-leafed, and brightly colored (not yellowing). Only wash them when you're ready to cook, not before storing, since any excess moisture can soften the sprouts and attract mold.

Carrots

When shopping, look for smooth form and rich color. When you get home, trim greens 2–3" from carrots. Save the slightly bitter greens separately in the crisper to use in salads, smoothies, or homemade veggie stock. Just like with beets, don't leave the carrot greens on—they can sap moisture from the carrots and make them wilt. The crisper drawer is the best place for carrots either wrapped in a paper bag or free to roam—they can last 2–4 weeks. Resuscitate limp carrots by peeling them and then soaking them for one hour in ice water. They'll soak up the fresh water and regain some snap.

Celery

Look for celery with firm, tightly packed stalks and fresh, bright leaves (no yellowing). Leave the stalks attached to the root until ready to use and store the whole bunch wrapped tightly in parchment paper, a clean dishtowel, or a bag—it can become soft if left unwrapped. If your celery has begun to fade, just like with carrots, you can soak the celery bunch in cold water to help it regain some crispness. Keep celery in a warmer spot in the fridge (usually towards the top and the front); if it gets too cold, it can flash-freeze and become soggy due to its high water content. Keeps for about 7–14 days.

Cherries

When buying red cherries look for a dark, rich depth of color. Note that Rainier cherries are yellow and red—this color doesn't indicate a lack of ripeness. If the stem is intact and bright green, the fresher the cherries. They should feel firm when you gently squeeze them. Store in the coolest part of your fridge (toward the bottom and the back) in a bag or open bowl—the crisper is a great spot for cherries. They can last 7–10 days.

Ginger Root

When buying fresh ginger root, pick one with a fresh, spicy fragrance and a smooth skin. The root should feel firm, solid, and heavy. It can last for up to 4–8 weeks in the crisper drawer if stored properly. For the longest, wrinkle-free life for your ginger root, wrap whole in a beeswax wrap or parchment and store in a closed plastic baggie. Cut and peel pieces only as you need it and store the rest unpeeled.

Green Beans

Quality green beans should be crisp and firm with uniform bright green coloring—stems can be on or removed. Store in a paper bag in the crisper drawer—this allows for some air flow. If you use plastic, poke holes in the bag. If beans are wilted, revive them in a bath of ice cubes and water for 5–15 minutes. Dry completely and return to the crisper for 5–7 days.

Hearty Greens

Keep hearty greens like collards, mustard, and kale in the crisper drawer for 7–14 days. Don't wash until ready to use as washing before storing can make them soggy, wilted and susceptible to mold. If bunched greens are starting to wilt in the fridge, make a fresh cut on the bottom of the stalk and place in a glass of water for 10–20 minutes—most will perk right up.

Herbs

Keep all fresh herbs in the crisper drawer (except basil which prefers the countertop) for 7–14 days. Be sure to reference the Ingredient Index for particular herb storage tips. Don't wash herbs until ready to use, since washing before storing can make them soggy, wilted and susceptible to mold. If bunched herbs are starting to wilt in the fridge, make a fresh cut on the bottom of the stem and place in a glass of water for 10–20 minutes—most will perk right up.

Lettuces

Homegrown or farmers' market arugula, spinach, romaine, mixed greens, and other tender lettuces are best stored unwashed, in a large, sealed container. Wash and dry the greens only when you are ready to enjoy them—prewashing and storing can make them soggy or wilted. Make sure leaves aren't packed in too tightly—this can bruise them. You can place one paper towel in the bottom of the container and one paper towel gently on top of the leaves, seal container and store for 7–10 days. If you think of it, every day or so, flip the container so that the bottom becomes the top—this helps shift the weight around so that the bottom leaves don't get smushed over time. As you likely know, that is where those slimy leaves come from...

Mushrooms

Select firm, even-colored mushrooms like Portobellos and shiitakes with smooth, dry skin (no wrinkles, slime, bruises, or fishy smell). They need to breathe, so store them whole, dry, and unwashed in a perforated paper bag (use a hole punch) or open bowl in the fridge for 7–10 days. Mushrooms are sponges, so you don't need wash them before storing or using unless you're marinating them for a cooked dish. Instead, to clean them before cooking, simply wipe them with a dry or slightly damp paper towel. Oftentimes you can leave mushrooms (mold-free please) to dry out completely in the fridge, and store them for longer. Then, when you're ready to use, simply rehydrate by adding straight into soups or stews, or by soaking in water, broth, or other cooking liquid before adding to veggie burger recipes, scrambles, stir fry, risotto, to make mushroom jerky—yup, their bold flavor works in all sorts of recipes.

Peppers

No matter what kind of peppers you're buying (bell, habañero, poblano, jalapeño, banana, chili), look for firm, deeply colored, glossy peppers without wrinkles. Store them in a paper bag or loose in the crisper drawer for up to 8 weeks.

Sugar Snap Peas & Snow Peas

Look for crisp, firm pods with uniform bright green color. For best flavor and texture, they shouldn't easily bend; they should snap. Store them in the crisper drawer in a breathable bag or container for 7–14 days. If they start to get soft, revive them in a bath of ice cubes and water for 5–15 minutes, then dry and return them to the crisper.

Summer Squash

For summer squash like zucchini and yellow squash, know that the larger they are, the more bitter in flavor, so try to select vegetables that are 8" or less in length, firm, and brightly colored with healthy stems (no sogginess or breakage). Store loose in the crisper drawer for 5–10 days.

One quick note: if you have an older refrigerator, keep delicate foods like greens toward the front door or better yet in the crisper—old fridges can flash-freeze greens or turn them soggy. Also, resist the temptation to wash fruits and veggies before storing them (unless otherwise advised). The added moisture from washing invites mold and spoiling. If you suspect that you have a damp fridge, you can line crisper drawers with clean paper towels or kitchen towels to absorb any excess moisture—it can help produce last longer.

Lesson Actions

Spend some more quality time diving into the Ingredient Index to learn more. Share with friends, family, or the course community one thing that you learned there or in this lesson that you're excited to put into practice and why. Tell us what surprised you, and/or write it all down in your cooking journal.