

Fruit and Vegetable Preparation

Avocados: A ripe avocado will yield slightly to the touch. Avocados will ripen in a few days in a paper bag or on the counter. Do not refrigerate avocados. To prepare, wash and cut in half lengthwise going around the pit. Twist the two halves gently to separate. Wedge a knife in the pit and gently pull to remove it. Pull off the skin with your fingers and slice.



Sweet potatoes / Yams: Choose sweet potatoes that are firm with no cracks or bruises. To keep them fresh, store them in a dry, cool place. Do not store in the refrigerator. If stored properly, sweet potatoes will keep for a month or longer. At room temperature, they should be used within a week of purchase. Sweet potatoes can be eaten raw, e.g., sweet potato sticks, but are usually cooked or baked. They can be prepared like regular potatoes.



Kiwi: Kiwi is ripe when slightly soft to the touch and has a fragrant smell. Ripe kiwi can be stored in the refrigerator for up to seven days. If they need to be stored longer, put kiwis in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. To peel, cut off the top and bottom ends, and then peel down the sides with a vegetable peeler or knife.



Brussels Sprouts: Look for firm, fresh, bright green sprouts with tight-fitting outer leaves free from black spots. Buy young, small sprouts (about 1 inch in diameter). Do not wash or trim sprouts before storing them. To prepare, trim stem ends without cutting the base of leaves or the sprouts will come apart during

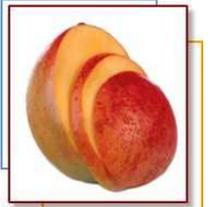


cooking. The easiest way to cook is in the microwave but they can also be steamed, sautéed or boiled.

Spinach: Look for fresh, green leaves that are not limp, damaged or spotted. Leaves should be dull green on top and bright green on the underside. Wash under clean, running water. Serve raw or cooked, e.g., steamed, boiled, microwaved, sautéed or stir-fried.



Mangoes: Should smell sweet and be soft when pressed. Color is not a reliable indicator of ripeness. To prepare, hold them upright and cut down along one of the fat sides, curving your knife to avoid the large oval pit. Repeat on the other side. Score-cut chunks of fruit from the peel. Trim the rest of the fruit off the pit and peel.



Pomegranates: Choose fruit that is brightly colored, plump and heavy. A pomegranate should not be firm but not too soft either. The skin should not have any blemishes or cracks. To prepare, cut off the crown (top) of the pomegranate. Score the rind in several places, but do not cut all the way through. Soak in cold water, upside down for 5-10 minutes. Break apart the rind under water and remove seeds. Strain the seeds from the water. Store seeds in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to two days.



Beets: Fresh beets should be firm, round and smooth with no soft spots. To prepare, cut off the stem and root, wash and scrub thoroughly. The red stain from beets is permanent, so cover work surfaces with wax paper. Beets can be boiled, roasted or steamed. If you roast them unpeeled they can be eaten like a baked potato.



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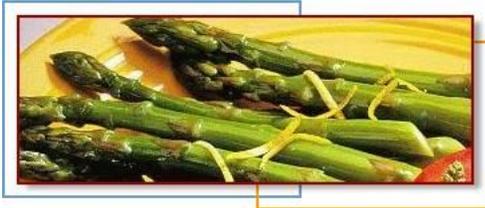
Jicama: Buy jicama with the root attached and when it is firm and skin is unblemished. Large jicama are usually not as flavorful as smaller ones. To prepare, peel the light brown skin with a vegetable peeler. Do not eat any of the skin or the flesh right under the skin; both are tough and inedible. Cut the jicama in half. With cut side down, cut thin sheets or sticks. Jicama can be eaten raw, or cooked, e.g., steam, roast, bake, broil, or mash.



Kohlrabi: Look for small bulbs of kohlrabi - about 3 inches in diameter or less - for a sweeter, more tender flavor. Larger kohlrabi bulbs tend to be woody. To prepare, cut off the leafy stalks and scrub kohlrabi bulbs clean. Wash and peel before slicing. Kohlrabi can be cut into wedges and served raw, or cooked by steaming or boiling.



Asparagus: Look for smooth skin, bright green color, compact heads and freshly cut ends. Thickness in no way indicates a lack of tenderness. Poorly or long-stored thin asparagus can be tough and flavorless; fresh, fat spears can be remarkably sweet and tender. To prepare, trim off stem ends. Asparagus can be roasted, grilled, steamed, boiled or pan-roasted.



Eggplant: Select eggplants that are relatively heavy for their size, with skins that are smooth, taut, and shiny. Tan patches, scars, or bruises on the skin are signs of decay underneath. When you press an eggplant with your thumb, it should feel firm and bounce back. The fuzzy caps and stems should be green and free of decay and mold. Eggplant is usually not eaten raw; instead it is best when fully cooked; e.g., grill or roast.



Squash: Choose squash that are firm and fairly heavy for their size, otherwise they may be dry and cottony inside. Look for squash that have bright, glossy exteriors and do not buy when they have nicks or bruises on their skins or soft spots.

Summer squash varieties are immature squashes, usually small in size, with a soft skin, white flesh and crunchy texture. They are 100% edible, seeds and all. Zucchini is the most popular variety. Summer squashes have high water content so when you prepare them do not overcook or they will turn to mush. Overcooking is probably why so many kids hate squash!



Winter squash varieties are fully mature squashes, usually larger in size, with a hard outer shell and a long shelf life. They are always eaten cooked and are best prepared baked or roasted. Acorn, spaghetti and butternut squash are the most popular variety.

