



SALVAGEABLE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GUIDELINES

Fruits and vegetables that may not appear to be top quality are often partially, if not entirely usable. Below are suggestions that will help you to determine if fruits and vegetables are suitable for distribution.

FRUITS

1) Bruised Fruits

Apples, pears, peaches, plums, nectarines and other such fruit that appear bruised are most often usable. Normally the bruised portion of the fruit can be easily cut away with a small knife, and very little of the fruit is wasted. Bruising is most often caused by the handling and method in which the fruit is shipped, and is not an indicator that the fruit is in any way spoiled. If the majority of the fruit is 'squishy', extremely discolored, has a foul odor, or the skin is wrinkling or peeling away with the slightest touch, the fruit is should most likely not be eaten.

2) Berries

Berries often spoil quickly and are fairly delicate, although usually are completely fine for consumption. If a small amount of berries in a container show mold, do not discard the entire container. Berries crush and bruise easily and sometimes can appear to be spoiled when they have simply been crushed. Quickly pick through containers of berries, only throwing away those that are obviously bad. If the container of fruit contains insects and obvious rot, discard the fruit. Berries can easily be washed and laid out to dry if handled gently. The shelf life of most berries can be increased by simply laying them out on parchment/paper towel covered sheet pans for storage.

3) Melons

Melons should not be discarded unless they have become very over ripe and show signs of spoilage. If the entire melon is overly soft it may be soiled, however, if just sections of the outer husk of the melon are soft it is most likely bruised and those portions can be easily cut away. Melons often have discoloration or deformed husks/rinds, this is no reason to discard a melon, slice it and check the inside before throwing it away. Melons that have spoiled often have an unpleasant odor and become extreme soggy and overly soft.

4) Citrus Fruit

Fruit such as oranges, lemons, limes and grapefruit may sometimes appear bad, but are

perfectly fine to eat. If the skin of the fruit looks damaged, bruised, has some mold, or is otherwise poor, simply peel the fruit before using it. Do not discard citrus fruit unless the skin has rotted through to the flesh, the fruit has shriveled, your finger easily pierces the skin when handled gently, or the flesh is rotten with the fruit is sliced open. Fruit that has slight discoloration, normally a small amount of brown around the seeds, is commonly acceptable to eat.

5) Bananas

Bananas are safe to eat until they are extremely over-ripe. Very bruised parts of otherwise edible bananas may be easily cut away. Bananas dotted with brown are perfectly fine to eat and are sometimes preferred once peeled because of their sweetness. Bananas that have become quite brown should still be peeled, these bananas are often still entirely firm enough to eat or have portions that can be easily cut away. Small black pits on banana peels are no worry. Bananas that are very brown or nearly black are over-ripe and are preferred for baking things like breads, muffins and cakes. Very over-ripe bananas can be peeled, cut into chunks, and frozen to bake with at a later date.

6) Grapes & Cherries

If a small amount of grapes or cherries in a container show mold or begin to wither or wrinkle, do not discard the entire container. Grapes and cherries crush and bruise fairly easily and sometimes can appear to be spoiled when they have simply been crushed. Quickly pick through containers of grapes and cherries, only throwing away those that are obviously bad. Wash grapes and cherries before using.

VEGETABLES

1) Lettuce/Greens/Cabbage

Semi wilted greens can be refreshed by submerging in ice water for 5-10 minutes followed by a thorough spin dry. Heads of lettuce that appear rotten can be salvaged by removing several outer leaves and cutting away any bruised parts. A way to make any precut lettuce taste fresher again is to pick out any pieces of less than ideal lettuce and submerge in ice water for 5-10 minutes, and then spinning dry.

2) Carrots

Bruised or damaged carrots can be salvaged by peeling away the external skin/layers, and removing any rotten pieces with a paring knife. Help keep peeled or cut carrots fresh by covering them with ice water in the refrigerator. Carrots that are becoming soft or 'floppy' can easily be peeled and used for things such as soups.

3) Celery

Wilted or slightly discolored celery can be revived by a 10-15 minute soak in ice water, followed by paring away any wilted or slightly rotten parts. Help keep celery fresh by covering it with ice

water in the refrigerator. Celery may also be simply peeled with a vegetable peeler if the surface of the vegetable looks pitted or is discoloring.

4) Onions

Onions sprouting green tops are still safe to eat, simply remove the green sprouts and peel as usual. If there are layers of onion that are bruised or rotten, peel them away until you get down to fresh pieces.

5) Cucumbers

Peel or cut away any damaged flesh, and serve as usual. Slightly overripe cucumbers can be bitter, but scooping out the seeds with a spoon before using helps reduce this. Many times the skin of the cucumber is undesirable, but the inside flesh is perfectly fine, in this case simply peel the cucumber.

6) Zucchini/Squash

Peel or cut away any damaged flesh and serve as usual. Slightly overripe squash are best served cooked, in a sauce or a stew for example. Zucchini and most types of squash can fairly easily be peeled. Try to keep zucchini dry while it is being stored.

7) Green Beans

Salvage less than ideal green beans by removing any that are soft to the touch, or slimy. Wash the remainder under lots of cold running water. Briefly cooking overripe green beans can be a way to enhance their flavor. Laying out green beans on a parchment/paper towel covered sheet pan during storage is an easy way to increase their shelf life.

8) Corn

Corn with dry, browned, or slightly slimy outer husks are frequently still good once the husk is removed. Be sure to thoroughly remove all of the husk and the thin corn silk strands on the inside, and prepare as usual. Do not roast corn with slimy husks. Do not use corn with obvious mold or rot on the corn itself. If the edible portion of the corn is slimy or the majority is black or molded, throw it away.

9) Potatoes

Bruised or damaged potatoes can be salvaged by peeling away the external skin/layers, and removing any rotten pieces with a paring knife. If potatoes are sprouting, they can be easily peeled and cleaned with a paring knife. Keep potatoes dry during storage. Potatoes can be stored refrigerated or at room temperature. Most often, potatoes that look poor on the outside are perfectly fine on the inside. Potatoes have a long shelf life. Potatoes that appear spoiled or moldy are often just 'dirty' and need to be washed before using.