



SALVAGEABLE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GUIDELINES

Fruit and vegetables that may not appear to be top quality are often partially, if not entirely, usable. Visible defects on produce are often due to natural blemishing, damage or decay. These issues don't make food unsafe for consumption: the bacteria that cause rot in produce don't make people sick. Below are suggestions that will help you to determine if fruits and vegetables are suitable for distribution.

FRUITS



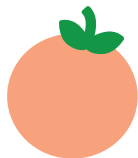
Bruised Fruits

Apples, pears, peaches, plums, nectarines and similar fruit that appear bruised are often usable. Cut away the bruised section and eat the remainder of the fruit normally. Bruising is often caused by shipping or handling and is not an indicator that the fruit is spoiled. If the majority of the fruit is squishy, extremely discolored, has a foul odor, or if the skin is wrinkling or peeling away with the slightest touch, the fruit is most likely spoiled and should not be eaten.



Berries

Berries can bruise easily and may appear spoiled when they have simply been crushed. If berries show mold or are bruised/crushed, pick through the berries and only throw away those that are obviously bad. Wash the remaining berries and lay out to dry. Throw away a container of berries if it contains insects or obvious rot. Increase the shelf life of berries by storing them on a parchment or paper towel covered sheet pan.



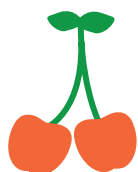
Melons

To check if a melon is safe to eat, slice it and check the inside. Melons that are spoiled have an unpleasant odor and become extremely soggy or overly soft. Melons should not be discarded unless they are very over-ripe and show signs of spoilage. If small sections of a melon are soft, they can be cut away. Melons do not need to be discarded if they have discoloration or deformed husks/rinds.



Citrus Fruits

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



Grapes and 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. As with berries, grapes and cherries can bruise easily and may appear to be spoiled when they are simply crushed. Quickly pick through containers of grapes and cherries and only throw away those that are obviously bad. Wash grapes and cherries before eating.



Bananas

Bananas are safe to eat until they are extremely over-ripe. Bruised areas and black pits can be cut away and the rest of the banana can be consumed. Bananas dotted with brown are fine to eat, and are sometimes preferred because of their sweetness. Bananas that are very brown or black are over-ripe and are preferred for baking things like breads, muffins and cakes. If a banana is extremely over-ripe, it can be cut into chunks and frozen to bake with at a later date.

VEGETABLES



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 the outer leaves and cutting away any bruised parts. To make precut lettuce taste fresher, pick out any wilting pieces before submerging in ice water and spinning dry.



Carrots

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



Celery

Wilted or slightly discolored celery can be revived by soaking in ice water for 10-15 minutes, followed by cutting away any rotten pieces. To keep celery fresh, cover it with ice water in the refrigerator. Celery may also be peeled with a vegetable peeler in the surface of the vegetable is pitted or discolored.



Onions

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



Cucumbers

Cucumbers with damaged skin often are fine inside. Peel or cut away any damaged flesh. Slightly over-ripe cucumbers can be bitter, but scooping out the seeds with a spoon can reduce bitterness.



Zucchini/Squash

Peel or cut away any damaged flesh. Slightly over-ripe squash are best served cooked. Zucchini and most types of squash can be easily peeled. Try to keep zucchini dry while it is stored.



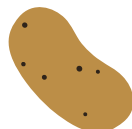
Green Beans

Salvage wilting green beans by removing any that are soft to the touch or slimy. Wash the remainder under cold running water. Briefly cook over-ripe green beans to enhance their flavor. Increase the shelf life of green beans by storing them on a parchment or paper towel covered sheet pan.



Corn

Corn with dry, browned or slightly slimy husks are often good once husk is removed. Remove all of the husk and the thin corn silk strands and prepare as usual. Do not roast corn with slimy husks or is slimy on the corn itself.



Potatoes

Potatoes that appear dirty, spoiled or moldy on the outside need to be washed. Cut away any rotten pieces with a paring knife. If potatoes have sprouted, peel and clean with a paring knife. Potatoes have a long shelf life; keep them dry during storage.