

5 SELECTING FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

If you've had a poor growing season or find it more convenient to purchase fresh produce from local retailers, what should you be looking for in 'fresh' produce? Use this 'reference guide' to ensure that your choice is bursting with nutrients!

Vegetables

Vegetable	Appearance	
	Use/Purchase	Avoid
Artichoke	Squeaks when squeezed! Heavy for its size. Deep green with tight leaf formation.	Browning of the tips.
Asparagus	Stalks should be rounded, firm and thin. Deep green or purplish tips.	Twisted or fat stalks.
Aubergine	Bright glossy skins.	Shrivelling or green near stem.
Beetroot	Less than 3 inches in diameter. Firm, smooth-skinned, deep colour.	Spots, bruises, soft wet areas, shrivelled or flabby.
Bell Peppers	Vivid colours. Taut skin, heavy for size, firm.	Injuries to skin.

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Broccoli	Tightly packed buds.	Yellow flowers emerging.
Brussels sprouts	Firm, compact, vivid green.	Yellow, wilted or perforated 'leaves'. Soft texture.
Carrots	Green tops attached – good indication of freshness and tenderness. Firm carrot flesh.	Tops which are slimy, yellow and wilted. Flabby carrot flesh. Sprouting, splitting.
Cauliflower	Tight firm head.	Heads with tiny black mould spots.
Celery	Crisp appearance. Snaps easily when separating. Tight and compact.	Splayed stalks. Yellow or brown patches. Brown or black discolouration at centre. Round stem in place of smaller stalks which should reside in centre of celery.
Celeriac	Firm, smooth. Medium size.	Soft spots.
Cucumbers	Firm. Bright medium to dark green.	Yellow, puffy, wrinkled at tips. Sunken water-soaked areas.
Fennel	Clean, firm, solid bulb. Whitish-pale green colour bulb. Straight, green stalks. Subtle smell of liquorice or aniseed.	Splitting, bruising, spotting. Flowering buds.
Garlic	Firm, plump with unbroken skin.	Soft, shrivelled, mouldy, sprouting.

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Leafy greens eg kale	Deeply coloured, firm leaves. Moist, hardy stems.	Wilting, yellow or brown leaves. Leaves with small holes.
Leeks	Firm, straight. Dark green leaves, white necks. 1.5 inch diameter or less.	Wilted, bruised bulbs, yellow discoloration.
Lettuce	Crisp-looking leaves.	Brown spots, slimy spots. Brown or yellow discolouration at leaves' edge. Wilted leaves.
Onions	Firm, dry, clean and well-shaped. Crisp, dry outer skins.	Soft spots, moisture at neck, dark patches, green sprouts, or signs of mould.
Peas	Firm, velvety, smooth pods. Vibrant, medium green colour. Sufficient number and size of peas to fill pod.	Light or dark green, yellow, whitish, grey, or speckled. Puffy, water-soaked, mildew.
Potatoes	Firm, well-shaped, quite smooth.	Green coloration or sprouting. Wet or dry rot.
Radishes	Deep red colour. Plump. Approx 1 inch diameter.	Too large. Yellow or decayed tops. Spongy feel.
Spinach	Vibrant, deep green leaves.	Wilted, strong odour, yellowing. Slimy coating.

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Spring onions	Green fresh looking. Bulb end should be white.	Wilted, yellow tops.
String beans	Slim, brightly coloured pods.	Limp, pitted with brown spots.
Summer squash eg. courgette	Average size. Heavy for size. Shiny unblemished skins.	Soft spots, or shrivelling.
Sweetcorn	Fresh green husks, enveloping the ear (not too loose). Fully formed kernels up to the tip of the ear. Plump kernels, tightly arranged in rows.	Dried out husks.
Tomatoes	Deep rich red colour. Smaller (greater levels of antioxidants based on skin:pulp ratio) eg. cherry, plum etc. Yields to slight pressure. Sweet fragrance.	Shrivelled, moulded, bruises, soft spots.
Turnips, Swedes	Firm, no blemishes. Small to medium size (sweetness).	Wrinkled surface. Large size.
Winter Squash eg. butternut, pumpkin	Dull, hard rind. Firm and heavy for size. (increased edible flesh).	Water-soaked areas. Mouldy.

Fruits

Fruit	Appearance	
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Apples	Firm and rich colouring.	Bruised, damaged apples.
Apricots	Rich orange colour. Slightly soft, fully ripened fruit.	Pale and yellow. Too firm (non tree-ripened).
Avocados	Slightly soft. Pebbled dark green or black skin (Hass Avocado). Smooth bright green skin (Fuertes avocado).	No dark sunken spots or cracks.
Bananas	Firm, not too hard. Bright colour. Green (home ripening). Yellow (ready to eat).	Bruises, other damage.
Blueberries	Firm texture. Even colour (blue hue with whitish bloom).	Dull colour. Soft, watery texture.
Cherries	Dark, even red colour. Bright, shiny. Large, firm texture.	Soft, overripe. Wrinkled skin. Leaking, sticky. Signs of decay.
Cranberries	Fresh, plump and firm. Deep red colour.	Soft, pale berries. Dry, brittle, dark stem. Brown coloured leaf 'tips'.

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Dragon Fruit	Bright pink/red, even coloured skin. Yields to gentle pressure.	Blotches or dark spots. Soft, mushy texture when gently squeezed.
Grapes	Plump, intact, wrinkle-free. Green Grapes – yellowish hue. Red Grapes – mostly red. Blue/Black Grapes – deep/rich.	Wrinkled. Leaking juice.
Grapefruit	Plump. Heavy for size, oblong profile. Firm. Reddish blush on part of skin.	Brown or soft spots.
Kiwi	Yields to gentle pressure (ripe). Hard (ripen at home in 2-3 days to one week at room temperature).	Soft, shrivelled, bruised.
Lemons	Thin peel/skin (juicier). Heavy for their size. Fully yellow.	Thick peels. Green tinges (acidic flavour). Wrinkling. Soft or hard patches. Dull colouring.
Limes	Firm and heavy for their size. Glossy, deep green skin.	Decay, mouldy. Brown spots, or brownish, or yellow colour.

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Lychees	Rosy skin. Fresh looking, firm skin. Yields a little to light pressure.	Green. Soft.
Mangoes	Yields to light pressure.	Wrinkled skin. Soft. Signs of decay.
Melons	Ripe melons - Tap melon with palm of hand to test for ripeness – should sound hollow. Heavy for its size. Stem section – smooth and slightly indented. Opposite end to stem – slightly soft, subtle melon smell.	Bruises. Soft spots. Overly strong aroma (indicates over-ripeness).
Nectarine/ Peaches	Evenly-coloured ranging from yellow to mostly red. Gives slightly to touch.	Very soft. Rock hard (unripe). Bruises, soft spots, blemishes. Wrinkled or punctured skin.
Oranges	Smoothly textured skin. Firm and heavy for their size. Smaller, thin skinned (juicier).	Soft spots. Traces of mould. Overly large.

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Papayas	Reddish-orange skin, slightly soft to touch (ripe). Patches of yellow colour (non-ripe – requires few more days).	Totally green or overly hard. Bruised, overly soft.
Passion fruit	Dimpled skin. Heavy for size.	Overly shrivelled. Mould.
Pineapples	Heavy for size. Fragrant, sweet smell at stem end.	Soft spots, bruises, darkened 'eyes'. Musty, sour or fermented smell.
Plums	Rich colour . Slightly soft at tip, yielding under light pressure (ready-to-eat). Slightly harder (home ripening).	Punctures, bruises or signs of decay. Excessively hard fruit.
Raspberries	Firm, plump. Deep colour.	Soft, mushy/weeping, mouldy. Stains or moisture in package.
Strawberries	Firm, plump. Glossy, deep red colour. Green caps attached. Medium-sized.	Mould. Excessively big. Dull colour. Green or yellow patches.