



K-State Extension Connection

For Immediate Release:

Date: July 21, 2016

The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

Storing Fresh Produce for Better Taste

Barbara L. Ames

Wildcat District Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

It's summertime and fresh fruits and vegetables abound at farmer's markets, grocery stores, and perhaps even in your own garden. Have you ever wondered about the best way to store your fresh produce to maintain the best flavor?

The flavor of fruits and vegetables is influenced by maturity and quality at harvest and by how they are stored afterwards. To maintain the freshness and flavor of the produce you buy at the market or grow in your garden, you should know how to store it at home.

Many fruits and vegetables should be stored only at room temperature because refrigerator temperatures (usually 38° to 42°F [3.3° to 5.6°C]) damage them or prevent them from ripening to good flavor and texture. For example, when stored in the refrigerator, bananas develop black skin and do not gain good sweetness, and sweet potatoes take on off-flavors and a hard core when cooked after being refrigerated.

Watermelons lose their flavor and deep red color if they are stored for longer than 3 days in the refrigerator. Pink tomatoes ripen to a better taste and red color if they are left at room temperature. They do not turn red in the refrigerator, and even red tomatoes kept in the refrigerator lose their flavor.

Other produce can be ripened on the counter, and then stored in the refrigerator. A few fruits and fruit-type vegetables gain sugar or soften when stored at room temperature. For example, Bartlett pears turn yellow and become softer and sweeter on the counter. After they

have ripened they can be stored for 1 to 3 days in the refrigerator without losing taste. Other examples include nectarines, peaches and plums.

Countertop Storage

The counter storage area should be away from direct sunlight to prevent produce from becoming too warm. Fruits and vegetables that are recommended to be stored on the counter, such as melons, tomatoes and squashes, can be kept for a few days. Even so, moisture loss can be reduced by placing produce in a vented plastic bowl or a perforated plastic bag. Do not place produce in sealed plastic bags on the counter because this slows ripening and may increase off-odors and decay due to accumulation of carbon dioxide and depletion of oxygen inside the sealed bag.

Ripening in a bowl or paper bag can be enhanced by placing one ripe apple with every 5 to 7 pieces of fruit to be ripened. Apples produce ethylene that speeds ripening. (Fuji and Granny Smith do not produce much ethylene and do not enhance ripening.)

Onions, potatoes and sweet potatoes are best if kept in a dark area such as a pantry.

Refrigerator Storage

Produce to refrigerate includes apples, berries, asparagus, green beans, broccoli, carrots, leafy greens, and anything that is cut up.

Refrigerated fruits and vegetables should be kept in perforated plastic bags in the produce drawers of the refrigerator. You can either purchase perforated plastic bags or make small holes with a sharp object in unperforated bags (about 20 pin holes per medium-size bag).

Separate fruits from vegetables (use one drawer for each group) to minimize the detrimental effects of ethylene produced by the fruits on the vegetables. Use all refrigerated fruits and vegetables within a few days since longer storage results in loss of freshness and flavor.

Adapted from: University of California Davis; Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Better Taste.

For more information about this topic or other topics, contact the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at [facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district](https://www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district).

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Seasoned Green Beans with Red Pepper Strips

This recipe is a good way to use fresh produce. It is a great source of Vitamins A and C and iron, and makes approximately two $\frac{3}{4}$ cup servings.

Ingredients

8 oz. fresh green beans
1 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds, or no-salt- added sunflower seeds
1 small red bell pepper, cut into quarter inch strips
1 Tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. sesame or olive oil

Directions

1. Trim green beans and cook in boiling water until tender.
2. Drain and rinse beans in cold water.
3. Place sesame/sunflower seeds in small dry sauté pan over medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring frequently to toast.
4. Place beans in serving bowl with pepper strips and seeds; toss with remaining ingredients.
5. Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to serve.

Nutrition Facts per serving: Calories 90; total fat 3.5g; cholesterol 0mg; sodium 270mg; carbohydrates 12g; fiber 5g; sugars 3g; protein 4g; vitamin A 40%; Vitamin C 150%; Calcium 4%; iron 45%.

Source: Dining with Diabetes—West Virginia University Extension Service, 2003