Harvesting and Storing Fresh Garden Vegetables

**Squash:**

**Winter**

Allow winter squash to ripen fully on the vine. A squash ready to harvest will have a hard rind, which a fingernail will not pierce. The skin will lose its luster and appear dull. The stem will turn from green to tan and be “corky” looking. The bottom of the fruit touching soil will be creamy to orange. Leave a short stem on the harvested fruit to prolong its storage life. Harvest before the first heavy freeze.

Use Storage Method 5. Cure winter squash at 80 to 85°F and 90 to 95% relative humidity for 10 days before placing them into long-term storage. Scatter the squash rather than storing them in a pile. Winter squash will store for 2 to 6 months. Do not cure acorn squash, as curing will toughen them. Use storage method 3 for acorn squash. They will keep only 1 to 2 months in storage.

**Turnips**

Harvest in late September or as needed for meals. Turnips are mild and tender when they are medium-sized—no more than 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Turnips tolerate light frosts but should be dug before the ground freezes. Overmature turnips will be tough and woody. Turnip greens are good when leaves are 4 to 6 inches long.

Use Storage Method 1 for greens. Turnip greens will store for 10 to 14 days.

Use Storage Method 1 for roots. Turnips will keep well under refrigeration, in an outdoor pit, or in an underground cellar. They will emit odors during storage. Turnips can be stored for 4 to 5 months.

**Tomatoes**

Tomatoes can be harvested when the fruit is “mature green”—three-quarters ripe to just less than fully ripe. The cavities inside mature green fruit are filled with a thick, jelly-like material and the seeds have turned from white to tan. Tomatoes picked at mature green to less than fully ripe will continue to ripen and color after harvest. Tomatoes completely ripened on the vine will have a very rich flavor. All ripe tomatoes have well-developed seeds that are not sliced when the fruit is cut. At season’s end, harvest mature green tomatoes before they are damaged by frost.

Use Storage Method 4 for mature green tomatoes. Mature green tomatoes will store 1 to 6 weeks, depending on their maturity when harvested. Move mature green tomatoes to 68 to 72°F as needed to ripen. Then store them as fully ripe tomatoes.

Use Storage Method 2 for fully ripe tomatoes. Fully ripe tomatoes will keep 4 to 10 days in storage.

**Nutrition Notes**

- **1/2 cup cooked summer squash, all varieties,** contains 18 calories, 1.3 grams of fiber, and small amounts of vitamin C (8.2% DV) and A (4.2% DV); calcium (2.4% DV), and iron (1.8% DV). Color = yellow/orange.

- **1/2 cup cooked winter squash, all varieties,** contains 40 calories and 2.9 grams of fiber. It is an excellent source of vitamin A (73% DV), a good source of vitamin C (16% DV), and a smaller source of folate (7% DV). Color = yellow/orange.

- **One medium, raw tomato** contains about 23 calories and 1.4 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (39% DV) and a good source of vitamin A (15% DV). Color = red, yellow.

**About the Authors**

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Introduction

Vegetables are grown in Idaho at elevations ranging from 1,000 feet to more than 6,000 feet. An accurate general prediction of harvest dates from time of planting is impossible because Idaho’s climates differ so greatly. Furthermore, harvest dates differ from season to season, with the type of vegetable, and even with the cultivar (variety) of a certain type of vegetable. Yet, harvesting at the proper stage of maturity is essential for peak flavor and nutrition. Vegetables are still alive after harvest; they need the proper stage of maturity is essential for peak flavor and nutrition. Vegetables are still alive after harvest; they need to provide energy to live. All successful storage regimes retard the rate of respiration and hence the rate at which the vegetables degenerate.

Harvest vegetables in the morning when they are likely to be at their coolest and will take handling better. Vegetables with waxy, waterproof skins requiring cool storage can be pre-treated in ice water to quickly remove the field heat (heat in the vegetable at harvest). Avoid bruising or otherwise damaging the vegetables to minimize decay during storage. Vegetable quality deteriorates rapidly after harvest. Keep fresh produce out of direct sunlight and cook, process, or place it in the proper storage conditions as soon as possible.

Follow the Vegetable Rainbow

Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that individuals eat at least three servings of vegetables a day. One serving is 1/2 cup cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw.

The vegetables you eat should look like a rainbow on your plate. The National Cancer Institute recommends eating blue, red, yellow, orange, purple, and white vegetables. All of the different colors found in vegetables contain different phytochemicals (substances found in plants) that may protect against some diseases.

Blue/purple vegetables contain phytochemicals called anthocyanins and phenolics. Their health benefits include:
- A lower risk of some cancers
- Urinary tract health
- Memory function
- Healthy aging

Green vegetables contain phytochemicals called isoflavonoids and indoles. Their health benefits include:
- A lower risk of some cancers
- Vision health
- Strong bones and teeth

White vegetables. Vegetables that fall in this category include white, tan, and brown vegetables that contain phytochemicals called allin, found in the garlic and onion family, and the mineral selenium, found in mushrooms. Including these vegetables in your diet helps maintain:
- Heart health
- Cholesterol levels that are already healthy
- A lower risk of some cancers

Yellow/orange vegetables contain phytochemicals called carotenoids and bioflavonoids. Their health benefits include:
- A healthy heart
- Vision health
- A healthy immune system
- A lower risk of some cancers

Red vegetables contain phytochemicals called lycopenes and anthocyanins. Their health benefits include:
- A healthy heart
- Memory function
- A lower risk of some cancers
- Urinary tract health

Percent Daily Value (% DV) provides an estimate of how individual foods contribute to the total diet. Foods that are an “excellent source” of a particular nutrient provide 20% or more of the daily value. Foods that are a “good source” of a particular nutrient provide between 10 and 19% of the daily value.

The nutrient analyses in this publication come from the USDA Agricultural Research Service Nutrient Data Laboratory, online at http://www.ars.usda.gov/nn/infobase/nut_search.pl Colors were provided by “5 A Day,” on the web at https://www.5aday.com

Radishes

Harvest just as soon as the roots reach an edible size. For a salad type radish, this is 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter. Radishes grow quickly, a factor that contributes to a mild flavor and crisp texture. If growth slows for any reason or if the radish becomes overmature, it will become spongy or woody and have a pungent, hot flavor.

Use Storage Method 1. Wash and cool radishes immediately. They will keep for 3 to 4 weeks.

Nutrition note: Radishes make a great low-calorie snack. 1/2 cup of shredded radishes contains 16 calories and 1 gram of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (30.2% DV). Color: red.

Rhubarb

Do not harvest a rhubarb plant the year of planting, and limit the length of harvest the second year. Harvest the stalks from early spring to about June. Leaves are needed thereafter to provide food reserves for plant growth. Harvest by pulling the stalks, not by cutting. Remove the leaf blades and use only the fleshy stem. Leaves contain large amounts of oxalic acid and should not be eaten.

Use Storage Method 1. Rhubarb will store 2 to 4 weeks.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of diced raw rhubarb contains 26 calories and 2.2 grams of fiber and is a good source of vitamin C (16.6% DV). Color: red.

Squash: Summer

Harvest summer squash before the seeds enlarge and harden. Fruits will be small, tender, and sweet with a skin that can be punctured with a fingernail. Zucchini and other cylindrical summer squash should be 6 to 8 inches long when picked. Scallops should be 3 to 4 inches in diameter. Summer squash develop quickly, and daily or every-other-day harvest will catch fruit at the ripe stage. Remove all overmature fruit and you can encourage continued flowering and fruit production.

Use Storage Method 2. Summer squash keeps for 5 to 14 days.

Rutabagas

Rutabagas will stand some frost but should be dug before the ground freezes. The root should be 3 to 5 inches in diameter to be mild flavored and tender. Rutabagas that are overmature or come from drought-stressed plants will be tough and woody. Harvest in late September or as needed for meals.

Use Storage Method 1. Rutabagas keep well under refrigeration, in an outdoor pit, or in an underground cellar. They will emit odors during storage. Storage is possible for 2 to 4 months.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked rutabagas contains 33 calories and 1.3 grams fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (27% DV). Color: yellow/orange.

Shallots

Shallot plants (tops and bulbs) can be eaten in the green stage. At maturity, the leaves begin to yellow and die down, and the bulbs reach their maximum size. Stop irrigating, as plants should mature in dry soil. Dig the shallot plants when the tops have died and lay them out of direct sunlight (to prevent sunburn) to dry and cure for 3 to 4 weeks leaving the tops attached. Before storing, cut or remove dried tops 1/2 to 1 inch above the bulb, remove any loose dirt, and trim the roots. Do not remove any of the protective, dry skin from the dried shallot.

Use Storage Method 3. Cure shallots during a warm, dry storage period of 2 to 3 months. After that, move shallots to long-term storage. Cured shallots will store for 1 to 8 months.

Nutrition note: 1/4 cup chopped raw shallots contain 29 calories and small amounts of vitamins A (9.5% DV) and C (5.3% DV). Color: white/tan/brown.

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Use Storage Method 2. Summer squash keeps for 5 to 14 days.

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Peppers

The fruits of pepper plants come in many shapes (elongated to round), sizes (petite to large), colors (yellow, green, red to almost black), and flavors (sweet and mild to fiery hot).

The bell types are usually picked when they reach full size—3 to 4 inches long—and are glossy, firm, and green. At this stage, they will break easily from the plant. Some gardeners prefer to cut off the fruits to keep from damaging the plant. Peppers may be left on the plant to ripen to their mature color, usually red, orange, or yellow. At that stage, flavors are more developed.

Hot peppers (chilies or chili peppers) are harvested and dried after they turn red. Jalapeno peppers, however, typically are used green.

Sweet Potatoes

Northern types of sweet potatoes will mature in Idaho. Dig roots in late September or early October. Handle roots carefully and do not bruise or scrape the skin.

Use Storage Method 4. Remove dirt but do not wash sweet potatoes. Cure by keeping the roots at 80 to 95°F in 95% relative humidity for 10 days to 2 weeks. Then transfer to cooler, less-humid conditions for long-term storage. Sweet potatoes will store for 4 to 6 months.

Storage Conditions

The best storage conditions depend on characteristics of the vegetable and part harvested for use. Ideal storage conditions are described in terms of the temperature and humidity of the storage area. Often the exact conditions won’t be available. In those cases, locate the best approximate conditions and improvise to improve them.

A refrigerator, basement, cellar or garage, attic, outbuilding, or under-the-house crawlspace are all possible storage locations. Containers and packaging such as plastic bags, mesh bags, boxes, and paper sacks can modify storage conditions. Some vegetables can be packed in damp or dry sand, soil, or sawdust to improve storage conditions.

If you’d like to build your own storage unit, your local extension educator can provide plans for low-cost structures.

Some vegetables cannot be stored with other vegetables because they will flavor them. For example, onions and garlic can be stored together but not in close proximity to other vegetables. Cross-transfer of odors can be avoided by NOT storing carrots with onions or cabbage with potatoes or other root crops.

Methods of Storage

Method 1: Cold, moist storage—32°F to 35°F, 95% relative humidity. The colder part of a refrigerator generally provides this range of temperatures. To maintain a high relative humidity, place vegetables in plastic bags or place them unbagged in the crisper, which should be half or more full. With all moist storage methods, if vegetables need to be washed, drain them before storing them.

Remove excess water or allow it to evaporate.

Method 2: Cool, moist storage—45°F to 50°F, 80%-90% relative humidity. A special refrigerator kept at these warmer temperatures may be warranted for storing large amounts of vegetables. Vegetables needing this type of storage are sensitive to chilling injury at temperatures below 45°F. Storing certain immature vegetables under these conditions will allow ripening that would not occur at a lower temperature. Vegetables should be in plastic bags or in the crisper (as in Method 1) to maintain the humidity of the surrounding air.

Method 3: Cool, dry storage—35°F to 40°F, 50%-60% relative humidity. Use cool rooms and buildings. Pack vegetables in something other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or brown paper bags or in cardboard boxes. If you wash the vegetables before storing them, dry them thoroughly before placing them in storage. A little dry dirt is not a storage problem, however; and you can clean the produce just before use.

Method 4: Warm, moist storage—55°F to 60°F, 80%-85% relative humidity. Basement areas, garages, and semi-heated outbuildings, combined with plastic bags or damp soil, sand, or sawdust, often satisfy these conditions.

Method 5: Warm, dry storage—55°F to 60°F, 60%-70% relative humidity. Store in basement areas, garages, and semi-heated outbuildings in packaging other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or brown paper bags or in cardboard boxes.

Asparagus

Wait until the third year after planting crowns to harvest asparagus. For the first harvest, limit your picking to no longer than 1 month. The plants are still expanding their root and storage systems, and excessive removal of shoots will weaken the plants. In following years, extend the harvest but stop when shoots become less than 1/2 inch in diameter.

Harvest spears 5 to 8 inches in length by cutting or snapping them off. To cut a spear, run a knife under the ground where the spear emerges. Since the cut will be below the point of fiber development, it will still be necessary to snap the stem before cooking. Cutting may damage some spear tips that have not emerged. That is why many horticulturists recommend snapping. To snap a spear, bend it from the top toward the ground. The spear will break at the point where it is free of fiber. Spear diameter is not related to tenderness. Asparagus spears are good fresh, frozen, or canned.

Use Storage Method 1. Packing the stem ends in moist toweling or resting the ends in a little water will restore or maintain freshness. Asparagus is still growing when harvested, so spears must be placed in an upright position to keep them from growing crooked. Average storage life is 1 to 3 weeks.

Beans: Fava (or broad)

Pick fava beans immature, when the pods are only 6 to 8 inches long. This is when the beans are sweetest and most tender. Shell the beans before cooking them.

To dry the beans for later use, spread mature pods in a warm, dry place until the pods and the beans are completely dry. Then hull the beans and store beans in insect-proof containers.

Use Storage Method 1 for fresh beans. Beans will store 5 to 7 days.
Use Storage Method 3 for dried beans. To protect against seed insects, place dried beans in the freezer at 0°F (or below) for 3 to 4 days before storage. Dried beans will keep well for 1 year.

Nutrition note: Dry beans fall into the meat class of food groups, 1/2 cup cooked fava beans are substantially higher in protein (6.5 grams) than the same amount of fresh beans (1 grams of protein) or other vegetables (1.2 grams of protein). 1/2 cup cooked fava beans also contains 94 calories and 5 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of folate (22% DV). Color: no category, as fava beans are considered a legume rather than a vegetable.

Beans: Lima
Lima beans are grown for their seeds. Pods are tough and fibrous. Lima beans are of best quality when young. They are olive green and tough-skinned if they remain on the plant. Harvest when the pods are plump and firm and before they turn yellow. The end of the pod should be spongy. The pods of different cultivars will differ in external appearance as the beans are developing. Test-pick a few pods to be sure that the beans are at a desirable stage of maturity. Remove pods regularly to keep plants flowering and fruiting. Shelling lima beans immediately after harvest is easiest, before the pods wilt. Toward the end of the growing season, the last of your crop can be allowed to remain on the plant until dry for use as dry beans.

Use Storage Method 1 for fresh beans. Beans will store for 5 to 7 days. Use Storage Method 3 for dried beans. To protect against seed insects, place dried beans in the freezer at 0°F, or below, for 3 to 4 days before storage. Dried beans keep well for 1 year.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked lima beans contains 108 calories, 7 grams of protein, and 7 grams of fiber and is a good source of iron (12% DV) and Vitamin (10% DV) and an excellent source of folate (20% DV). Color: no category, as lima beans are considered a legume rather than a vegetable.

Beans: Snap (green, yellow, and purple)
Pick when pods are fleshy with pliable tips and seeds well formed, immature, and do not cause pods to bulge. Harvest beans should break easily with a “snap” when bent. Be careful not to break the stems or branches of the plant as you pick. Harvest the pods often, as the plants will continue to form new flowers and produce more beans if all the pods are removed before the seeds mature.

Use Storage Method 2. Average storage life is 7 to 10 days.

Beets
Beets may be harvested over a lengthy period. Begin to harvest the greens when leaves are 4 to 6 inches long. Greens with roots attached are best when harvested before the roots grow too to 1 inch in diameter, but they can be harvested at any stage of growth. Beet greens are delicious when fresh and can be used raw in salads and frozen or canned.

Harvest beet roots when they grow to 1 1/2 to 3 inches in diameter, depending on the cultivar. Larger beets can be used, especially for pickling. Beets become tough and stringy in dry, hot weather so harvest them at an earlier stage of maturity. Late summer plantings can be harvested long into the fall.

Use Storage Method 1 for greens or greens with the roots attached. Bunched beets will keep 10 to 14 days.

Use Storage Method 1 for beet roots. Wash and refrigerate immediately. Beets will keep for 3 to 5 months.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked beet greens contains 19 calories and 2 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin A (24% DV) and C (10% DV). Color: Green. 1/2 cup cooked beet roots contains 110 calories, 1.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron (8% DV), vitamin C (6% DV), and folate (6% DV). Color: red, yellow.

Broccoli
The edible parts of broccoli are the compact clusters of unopened flower buds and the attached stem. Young tender leaves are also edible. The green buds develop a central head and possibly several smaller side shoots. Cut the central head with 3 to 6 inches of stem. The head should be firm to hand pressure, compact, and all the buds should be closed. When yellow flower petals appear, the prime harvest period has passed.

Removing the central head generally stimulates the side shoots in the axils of the lower leaves to develop for later pickings. Continue to harvest broccoli for several weeks. Broccoli develops best in cooler temperatures, so it can be planted in spring for summer harvest and in fall for winter harvest.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked green beans contains 22 calories and 2 grams of fiber and is a good source of vitamin C (10% DV). Color: green, yellow, purple.

Okra
Okra has the best quality when pods are immature and 2 to 3 inches long. The pods should be bright green with small seeds. Pick to 7 days after the flower wilt.

Gather top quality may require daily harvesting. Overmature pods are woody, hollow, and pithy. To keep the plants producing, remove all overmature pods.

Use Storage Method 2. Chill immediately. Okra will keep for 7 to 10 days.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked okra contains 26 calories and 2 grams of fiber, an excellent source of vitamin C (22% DV), and contains small amounts of vitamin A (9% DV), calcium (5% DV), and iron (2% DV). Color: green.

Onions
Onions for fresh use can be harvested anytime during their growth. Onions for dry storage should be left in the ground until 20 to 50% of the tops have fallen over.

Use Storage Method 4. Dig the onions and lay them on a flat surface, tops attached, out of direct sunlight (to prevent sunburn) to dry and cure for 3 to 7 days at 60 to 80°F and 40 to 50% relative humidity. Before storing, cut or remove dried tops 1 to 3 inches above the onion, remove any loose dirt, and trim the roots. Do not remove any of the protective, dry skin from the onion. Cured onions will store for 1 to 8 months.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked onion contains 46 calories, 1.3 grams of fiber, and small amounts of vitamin C (9% DV), calcium (2% DV), and iron (1% DV). Color: white, green, red.

Parsley
Harvest when outer leaves with stalks are 3 to 4 inches long. Harvest throughout the summer until heavy frosts damage the plants. Parsley will flower, fruit, and die in its second season. Replace yearly from seed.

Nutrition note: Parsley is usually not eaten in a large enough quantity to affect nutrition to any extent. One tablespoon of raw parsley contains 1.4 calories, 0.1 gram of fiber, 8% DV of vitamin C, and 4% DV of vitamin A. Color: green.

Parsnips
Leave parsnips in the ground until their tops freeze in late fall, as their flavor becomes sweeter when the roots are exposed to temperatures below 40°F. Unharvested roots can be left in the garden to be used during the winter. Small to medium width roots have the best texture and flavor. Large roots and overwintered roots forming seed stalks become woody.

Use Storage Method 1. Parsnips will keep 2 to 6 months.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked parsnip contains 63 calories and 3 grams of fiber and is a good source of vitamin C (17% DV) and folate (11% DV). It contains small amounts of calcium (15% DV) and iron (2.5% DV). Color: white/ tan/brown.

Peas
Harvest shellling peas when the pea pods are round, plump, and firm and the peas are not too large and still sweet and tender. Shell peas immediately or just prior to use.

Pick edible-pod sugar or snow peas as soon as the seeds are barely perceptible in the pod. These peas have flat pods that are eaten before the pea seeds mature. Large, more mature pods are tough and stringy, and they will not be tender when cooked.

Edible snap pea pods are rounded and the seeds par-
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**Kohlrabi**
Harvest when the stem is 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Large, older kohlrabi is tough and woody and will have an off flavor. Harvest by pulling the plant. Cut the root off at the base of the swollen stem and remove the leaves. Very young leaves are edible.

*Use Storage Method 1.* Kohlrabi will store 2 to 4 weeks.

**Lettuce**
Begin harvesting lettuces when the base reaches about 1/2 inch in diameter. Lettuces will withstand some freezing weather, allowing for a long harvest season.

*Use Storage Method 1.* Lettuces will store well for 1 to 2 months.

**Melon: Cantaloupe (muskmelon)**
Cantaloupes, also known as muskmelons, usually change to a golden or yellow color as they ripen. When the stem slips from the melon with light pressure, it is ready for harvest.  Melon is a bit on the sweet side. Harvesting and Storing

1 cup diced cantaloupe contains 55 calories and 1.25 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamins C (110% DV) and A (100% DV). Color = yellow/orange.

**Melon: Crenshaw and Honeydew**
Crenshaw and honeydew melons with short times to maturity are worth trying to grow in Idaho. Most can be grown in the warmer areas of the state below 2,500 feet elevation. The entire melon, including the portion resting on the ground, will change to the color characteristic of the variety (green, yellow, orange, or gold) when ripe. These melons also have a sweet aroma when they are ready to use, but the stems do not slip as they do on cantaloupe, and the melons must be cut from the plant.

*Use Storage Method 2.* Crenshaw will store for 2 weeks, honeydew for 3 to 4 weeks.

**Melon: Watermelon**
It takes experience to know when to harvest watermelons. They should be fully mature, as the fruits do not develop internal color and sugar off the vine. Look for these signs of ripeness: (1) the light-green, curly tendrils on the stem near the point of attachment of the melon turn brown and dry; (2) the surface color of the fruit turns yellow.

*Use Storage Method 1.* Watermelon will store for 3 to 4 weeks.

**Brussels Sprouts**
The small sprouts or buds of Brussels sprouts form heads 1 to 2 inches in diameter. They may be packed (or cut) off the stem when they are firm and about 1 inch in diameter before the outer leaves on the heads split. The lower sprouts mature first. Remove lowermost leaves as you harvest. Harvest sprouts after the leaves turn yellow. To maximize fall harvests, break the growing tip of the plant in mid-August to force the remaining sprouts to mature. Brussels sprouts are hardy to 0°F and their flavor is improved by frost. They can be sown in the garden for winter use. Alternatively, cut or pull plants and store them in cold, moist conditions (storage method 1), cutting off the sprouts as needed.

*Use Storage Method 1.* Average storage life is 3 to 5 weeks.

**Carrots**
Carrots can be used any time they are 1 1/2 inch or more in diameter. Carrots will reach a minimum diameter of 1/4 to 1 inch about 60 to 70 days after planting. At that time, harvest them over a 3- to 4-week period. Very large carrots may be woody or tough and have lower sugar contents. Finish harvest before the ground freezes.

*Use Storage Method 1.* Remove tops before storage. Carrots will keep 4 to 6 months.

**Cauliflower**
Cauliflower heads develop rapidly under proper growing conditions. Tie the inner leaves over the young heads when they are 2 to 3 inches in diameter to shade them from the sun and keep them a bright, white color. Heads will ultimately grow to 6 to 8 inches in diameter. However, harvest can begin 3 to 4 days after tying the leaves or when the head is white and compact. The head is over-mature when it is soft or when the plant leaves are yellow. Harvest heads by cutting.

*Use Storage Method 1.* Chill cauliflower immediately after harvest. Cauliflower will store 2 to 4 weeks.

**Corn: Sweet**
Pick sweet corn ears when the kernels are not fully mature. Sweet corn is ready to pick when the juice from a kernel punctured with a fingernail appears opaque rather than clear. It should not be thick or doughy. Kernels reach this stage about 20 days after the appearance of the first silk strands and the stage lasts a week or less, depending on the cultivar. At harvest, the kernels should be smooth and plump even near the tip of the ear. The husk on the ear will be tight and green and the pollination silks will be dry. Check ears frequently so as not to miss the perfect harvest stage. To harvest, snap off the ears by...
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Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked eggplant contains 14 calories, 1.2 grams of fiber, and small amounts of folate (2% DV), vitamin C (1% DV), and iron (1% DV). Color = purple.

Endive and Escarole
Harvest when the plant is fully developed (10 to 12 inches across) and the center leaves are blanched for 2 to 3 weeks by covering them or tying them loosely to exclude light. Generally, only the pale, center leaves are eaten.

Use Storage Method 1. Escarole can also be lifted from the ground, transplanted into damp soil, stored in the dark, and harvested as needed for 1 to 3 months. Endive will store for 2 to 3 weeks after harvest.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of chopped, raw, escarole contains 8 calories and 2 grams of fiber and is a good source of folate (18% DV). Color = green.

Garlic
When garlic bulbs are mature, the tops yellow and begin to dry. Dig bulbs when the tops are about one-half brown and one-half green. Dry bulbs in the garden for several days with their tops attached and out of the direct sun. After drying, clean off the loose dirt and trim the roots. Alternatively, move the tops to 1 to 1 1/2 inches above the bulb. Braid the leaves. Alternatively, remove the tops to 1 to 1 1/2 inches above the bulb. Use Storage Method 3. Keeping garlic in warm, dry conditions for 3 to 6 weeks will cure it. This drying treatment will prolong storage life. Garlic will keep for 6 to 7 months.

Nutrition note: 1 serving of garlic is 1 garlic clove, which contains 3 calories. Garlic contains no fat, sodium, or cholesterol. Some studies show that it may lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Color = white.

Greens: Beet
See beets.

Greens: Collards
Collard plants resemble cabbage plants. If they look big enough to "head" (if they were cabbages), they are ready to harvest. All green parts of the plant are edible

and may be harvested any time during the season. Plants can be cut at ground level when they are 6 to 10 inches high. Alternately, pick the larger leaves when the plants are 10 to 12 inches high, leaving the younger leaves for later use.

Use Storage Method 1. Collard greens will store to 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of chopped, raw collards contains 11 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamins A (24% DV) and C (21% DV) and a good source of folate (15% DV). Color = green.

Greens: Kale
The lower outer leaves may be individually picked when kale is small (6 to 8 inches long) and tender. New leaves will then grow. Alternatively, the entire plant may be cut at any time. Frost improves the flavor, and the plant will withstand night frosts. Late summer plantings usually give best results. Kale can be harvested until early winter when severe freezes injure or kill the plants.

Use Storage Method 1. Harvested kale will keep to 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of chopped, raw kale contains 34 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamins C (134% DV) and A (119% DV). Color = green.

Greens: Mustard
Harvest outer leaves of mustard when they are 6 to 8 inches long. New leaves will provide a continuous harvest until the flavor becomes strong and the leaves become tough from hot weather. Seed mustard again in late summer for a fall crop.

Use Storage Method 1. Wash and chill mustard greens immediately. Mustard greens can be stored for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of raw mustard greens contains 13 calories and 0.6 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of folate (26% DV), vitamin C (65% DV), and vitamin A (25% DV), iron (20% DV), and vitamin A (70% DV). Color = green.

Greens: New Zealand Spinach
Pick only young leaves or tips of older ones. Harvest when the leaves reach 8 to 10 inches in length. Cut or snap off branches 3 to 4 inches from the tips. Harvest can continue throughout the growing season as new branches form. New Zealand spinach will not form a seed stalk in response to the warm days of summer, so can be harvested throughout the season.

Use Storage Method 1. New Zealand spinach will store for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of chopped, raw New Zealand spinach contains 8 calories and is an excellent source of vitamin C (28% DV) and A (49% DV). Color = green.

Greens: Spinach
Spinach leaves can be harvested when they are quite small. Cutting leaves off without damaging the growing point of the plant will provide a continuous harvest, as new leaves will continue to form and grow. Avoid eating older and yellowing leaves. Seed stalk development begins with warmer days in early summer. Harvest all spinach before this time, as quality deteriorates rapidly after this stage of growth. Planting another crop in early fall will provide spinach until frost kills the plants.

Use Storage Method 1. Wash spinach well and store it immediately. Spinach will store 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition note: 1 cup of raw shredded spinach contains 40 calories and 5 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (25% DV), iron (20% DV), and vitamin A (70% DV). Color = green.

Greens: Swiss Chard
Swiss chard is related to garden beets. It does not produce a usable root and is grown for its leaves and stems, which can be harvested all season. Harvest chard by cutting individual outer leaves close to the ground. Even large leaves are good, but the younger leaves 6 to 8 inches tall have a milder flavor. If you do not damage the terminal bud of the plant, located near the ground and in the center of the plant, the plant will continue to produce until it freezes in the fall.

Use Storage Method 2. Chard will keep for 7 to 10 days.

Nutrition note: 1 cup raw Swiss chard contains 7 calories and 0.6 grams of fiber. Chard is an excellent source of vitamin A (24% DV) and a good source of vitamin C (18% DV). Color = green.

Greens: Turnip
See turnips.

Jerusalem Artichoke
Dig the tubers as needed anytime the plant is not actively growing in the fall or spring. A supply can be harvested for winter use before the soil freezes.

Use Storage Method 1. Jerusalem artichokes will store for 2 to 5 months.
Harvesting and Storing

Fresh Garden Vegetables

Harvest and Storing

Cucumbers

The picking size of cucumbers varies according to the cucumber type and the desired use, but cucumbers should always be picked before the fruits fully enlarge and harden. They may be picked when they are 2 inches long or shorter for tiny pickles, 4 to 6 inches long for larger pickles or pickle slices, and up to 6 to 8 inches long for some of the slicing varieties. A cucumber is of highest quality when the fruit is firm, bright, and green in color with no dullness or yellowing to the skin. Mature fruit left on the plants will stop cucumber production. Since cucumber fruits grow rapidly, pick daily or every other day.

Use Storage Method 2. Slicing type cucumbers pickle best if cured for 10 to 14 days. The picking size of cucumbers varies according to the cucumber type and the desired use, but cucumbers should always be picked before the fruits enlarge and harden. They may be picked when they are 2 inches long or shorter for tiny pickles, 4 to 6 inches long for larger pickles or pickle slices, and up to 6 to 8 inches long for some of the slicing varieties. A cucumber is of highest quality when the fruit is firm, bright, and green in color with no dullness or yellowing to the skin. Mature fruit left on the plants will stop cucumber production. Since cucumber fruits grow rapidly, pick daily or every other day.

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Harvesting and Storing

**Fresh Garden Vegetables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Storage Method</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kohlrabi</td>
<td>Harvest when the stem is 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Large, older kohlrabi is tough and woody and will have an off flavor. Harvest by pulling the plant. Cut the root off at the base of the swollen stem and remove the leaves. Very young leaves are edible.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Kohlrabi will store 2 to 4 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrient note: 1 cup raw, sliced kohlrabi contains 16 calories, 0.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron (0.3% DV) and vitamin C (0.6% DV). Color = green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>Harvest lettuce before a seed stalk starts to develop. Lettuce becomes bitter after the seed stalk forms and in hot weather. Usually, the seed stalk can be felt in the plant center before it begins to show. Harvest the entire plant or individual leaves. Leaves will regrow on plants with an undamaged growing tip, found at the center of the plant.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Leeks will store well for 1 to 2 months.</td>
<td>Nutrient note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 16 calories, 0.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron (0.3% DV) and vitamin C (0.6% DV). Color = green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melon: Crenshaw and Honeydew</td>
<td>Crenshaw and honeydew melons with short times to maturity are worth trying to grow in Idaho. Most can be grown in the warmer areas of the state below 2,500 feet elevation. The entire melon, including the portion resting on the ground, will change to the color characteristic of the variety (green, yellow, orange, or gold) when ripe. These melons also have a sweet aroma when they are ready to use, but the stems do not slip as they do on cantaloupe, and the melons must be cut from the plant.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 2. Crenshaw will store for 2 weeks, honeydew for 3 to 4 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrient note: 1 cup diced honeydew contains 248 calories and 1 gram of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (18% DV). Calcium (1% DV) and iron (less than 1% DV). Color = green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melon: Watermelon</td>
<td>It takes experience to know when to harvest watermelons. They should be fully mature, as the fruits do not develop internal color and sugar off the vine. Look for these signs of ripeness: (1) the light-green, curly tendrils on the stem near the point of attachment of the melon turn brown and dry, (2) the surface color of the fruit change from green to orange, (3) the surface will be raised and smooth even near the tip of the melon, (4) the surface color of the fruit change from green to orange, (5) the stem slips from the melon when pressure is applied, and (6) a white spot will appear on the stem near the point of attachment of the melon. Melons should be fully mature. They should be firm and a good source of vitamin C (10% DV). Color = green.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Average storage life is 3 to 5 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked broccoli contains 22 calories and 2 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (77% DV) and A (22% DV) and a good source of folate (10% DV). Color = green.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeks</td>
<td>Begin harvesting leeks when the base reaches about 1/2 inch in diameter. Leeks will withstand some freezing weather, allowing for a long harvest season.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Leeks will store well for 1 to 2 months.</td>
<td>Nutrient note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 16 calories, 0.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron (0.3% DV) and vitamin C (0.6% DV). Color = green.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Brussels Sprouts</td>
<td>The small sprouts or buds of Brussels sprouts form heads 1 to 2 inches in diameter. They may be picked (or cut) off the stem when they are firm and about 1 inch in diameter before the outer leaves on the heads split. The lower sprouts mature first. Remove lowermost leaves as you harvest. Harvest sprouts before the leaves turn yellow. To maximize fall harvests, break the growing tip of the plant in mid August to force the remaining sprouts to mature. Brussels sprouts are hardy to 0°F and their flavor is improved by frost. They can be grown in the garden for winter use. Alternatively, cut or pull plants and store them in cold, moist conditions (storage method 1), cut off the sprouts as needed.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Average storage life is 3 to 5 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 22 calories and 2 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (10% DV) and A (22% DV) and a good source of folate (10% DV). Color = green.</td>
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<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>Cut cabbages when the heads are compact and before they split open. Heads should be heavy for their size. Mature cabbage heads will keep longer in the garden if their roots are either cut with a shovel or broken by twisting the plant. A crop of small heads (cabbage sprouts) will form at the base of the leaves remaining after the harvest of spring-planted cabbage. Encourage them by cutting the stem as close to the head as possible, leaving the leaves at the base of the stem intact. When sprouts are firm and 2 to 4 inches in diameter, they are ready to harvest. Plant cabbage in late summer for fall harvest. Use Storage Method 1. Some types of cabbage are used cheaper than others. Be sure to match your needs with the correct type. Early type cabbages store for 3 to 6 weeks, while late types will keep 3 to 4 months.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Average storage life is 3 to 5 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 33 calories and 2.5 grams of fiber. Carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A (383% DV). Color = yellow/orange, purple.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>Carrots can be used any time they are 1/2 inch or more in diameter. Carrots will reach a minimum diameter of 1/4 to 1 inch about 60 to 70 days after planting. At that time, harvest them over a 3- to 4-week period. Very large carrots may be woody or tough and have lower sugar contents. Finish harvest before the ground freezes.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Remove tops before storage. Carrots will keep 4 to 6 months.</td>
<td>Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 33 calories and 2.5 grams of fiber. Carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A (383% DV). Color = yellow/orange, purple.</td>
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<td>Cauliflower</td>
<td>Cauliflower heads develop rapidly under proper growing conditions. Tie the inner leaves over the young heads when they are 2 to 3 inches in diameter to shade them from the sun and keep them a bright, white color. Heads will ultimately grow to 6 to 8 inches in diameter. However, harvest can begin 3 to 4 days after tying the leaves or when the head is white and compact. The head is over-mature when it is soft or when the plant leaves are yellow. Harvest heads by cutting. Use Storage Method 1. Chill cauliflower immediately after harvest. Cauliflower will store 2 to 4 weeks.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Average storage life is 3 to 5 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 14 calories and 1.7 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (46% DV). Color = green.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corn: Sweet</td>
<td>Pick sweet corn ears when the kernels are not fully mature. Sweet corn is ready to pick when the juice from a kernel punctured with a fingernail appears opaque rather than clear. It should not be thick or doughy. Kernels reach this stage about 20 days after the appearance of the first silk strands and the stage lasts a week or less, depending on the cultivar. At harvest, the kernels should be smooth and plump even near the tip of the ear. The husk on the ear will be tight and green and the pollination silks will be dry. Check ears frequently so as not to miss the perfect harvest stage. To harvest, snap off the ears by slightly pulling the ear from the plant.</td>
<td>Use Storage Method 1. Average storage life is 3 to 5 weeks.</td>
<td>Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 14 calories and 1.7 grams of fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (46% DV). Color = green.</td>
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**Nutrition note:** 1 cup raw, sliced kohlrabi contains 36 calories, 0.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron (0.3% DV) and vitamin C (0.6% DV). Color = green. 1 cup cooked kohlrabi contains 33 calories and 2.5 grams of fiber. Carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A (383% DV). Color = yellow/orange, purple.
Beets
Beets may be harvested over a lengthy period. Begin to harvest the greens when leaves are 4 to 6 inches long. Greens with roots attached are best when harvested before the roots grow to be 1 inch in diameter, but they can be harvested at any stage of growth. Beet greens are delicious when fresh and can be used raw in salads and frozen or canned.

Harvest beet roots when they grow to 1 1/2 to 3 inches in diameter, depending on the cultivar. Larger beets can be used, especially for pickling. Beets become tough and stringy in dry, hot weather so harvest them at an earlier stage of maturity. Late summer plantings can be harvested long into the fall.

Use Storage Method 1 for greens or greens with the roots attached. Rinched beets will keep 10 to 14 days. Use Storage Method 1 for beet roots. Wash and refrigerate immediately. Beets will keep for 3 to 5 months.

Broccoli
The edible parts of broccoli are the compact clusters of unopened flower buds and the attached stem. Young tender leaves are also edible. The green buds develop a central head and possibly several smaller side shoots. Cut the central head with 3 to 6 inches of stem. The head should be firm to hand pressure, compact, and all the buds should be closed. When yellow flower petals appear, the prime harvest period has passed.

Removing the central head generally stimulates the side shoots to develop for several weeks. Broccoli develops best in cooler temperatures, so it can be planted in spring for summer harvest and in fall for winter harvest.

Onions
Onions for fresh use can be harvested anytime during their growth. Onions for dry storage should be left in the ground until 20 to 50% of the tops have fallen over.

Use Storage Method 5. Dig the onions and lay them flat, tops attached, out of direct sunlight (to prevent sunburn) to dry and cure for 3 to 7 days at 60 to 80°F and 40 to 50% relative humidity. Before storing, cut or remove dried tops 1 to 3 inches above the onion, remove any loose dirt, and trim the roots. Do not remove any of the protective, dry skin from the onion. Cured onions will store for 1 to 8 months.

Nutrition note:
1/2 cup cooked onion contains 46 calories, 1.3 grams of fiber, and small amounts of vitamin C (19% DV), calcium (2% DV), and iron (1% DV). Color = white, green, red.

Parsley
Harvest when outer leaves with stalks are 3 to 4 inches long. Harvest throughout the summer until heavy frosts damage the plants. Parsley will flower, fruit, and die in its second season. Replant yearly from seed.

Use Storage Method 1. Parsley will keep 1 to 2 months.

Nutrition note:
Parsley is usually not eaten in a large enough quantity to affect nutrition to any extent. One tablespoon of raw parsley contains 1.4 calories, 0.1 gram of fiber, 8% DV of vitamin C, and 4% DV of vitamin A. Color = green.

Parsnips
Leave parsnips in the ground until their tops freeze in late fall, as their flavor becomes sweeter when the roots are exposed to temperatures below 40°F. Unharvested roots can be left in the garden to be used during the winter. Small to medium width roots have the best texture and flavor. Large roots and overwintered roots forming seed stalks become woody.

Use Storage Method 1. Parsnips will keep 2 to 6 months.

Nutrition note:
1/2 cup of cooked parsnips contains 63 calories, 3 grams of fiber and a good source of vitamin C (17% DV) and folate (11% DV). It contains small amounts of calcium (15% DV) and iron (2.3% DV). Color = white/tan/brown.
Potatoes: Irish
Harvest potatoes whenever they are large enough to ready to harvest will have a hard rind and mature seeds. Allow pumpkins to ripen fully on the vine. A pumpkin will be done when the rind is hard to the touch, pull it off, and see if it is done. A little dry dirt is not a storage problem, but if you wash your vegetables in something other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or paper sacks.

Storage Conditions
The best storage conditions depend on characteristics of the vegetable and plant part harvested for use. Ideal storage conditions are described in terms of the temperature and humidity of the storage area. Often the exact conditions won't be available. In those cases, locate the best approximate conditions and improvise to improve them. A refrigerator, basement, cellar or garage, attic, outbuilding, or a semi-heated outbuilding is packed in damp or dry sand, soil, or sawdust to improve storage conditions. If you'd like to build your own storage unit, your local extension educator can provide plans for low-cost structures. Some vegetables cannot be stored with other vegetables because they will flavor them. For example, onions and garlic can be stored together but not in close proximity to other vegetables. Cross-transfer of odors can be avoided by NOT storing carrots with onions or cabbage with potatoes or other root crops.

Methods of Storage
Method 1: Cold, moist storage—32–40°F, 95% relative humidity. The colder part of a refrigerator generally provides this range of temperatures. To maintain a high relative humidity, place vegetables in plastic bags or place them unbagged in the crisper, which should be half or more full. With all moist storage methods, if vegetables need to be drained, drain them before storing them. Remove excess water or allow it to evaporate.

Method 2: Cool, moist storage—45–50°F, 80–90% relative humidity. A special refrigerator kept at these warmer temperatures may be warranted for storing large amounts of vegetables. Vegetables needing this type of storage are sensitive to chilling injury at temperatures below 45°F. Storing certain immature vegetables under these conditions will allow ripening that would not occur at a lower temperature. Vegetables should be in plastic bags or in the crisper (as in method 1) to maintain the humidity of the surrounding air.

Method 3: Cold, dry storage—35–35°F, 50–60% relative humidity. Use cool rooms and buildings. Pack vegetables in something other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or brown paper bags or in cardboard boxes. If you wash the vegetables before storing them, dry them thoroughly before placing them in storage. A little dry dirt is not a storage problem, however; you can clean the produce just before use.

Method 4: Warm, moist storage—55–60°F, 80–85% relative humidity. Basement areas, garages, and semi-heated outbuildings, combined with plastic bags or damp soil, sand, or sawdust, often satisfy these conditions.

Method 5: Warm, dry storage—55–60°F, 60–70% relative humidity. Store in basement areas, garages, and semi-heated outbuildings in packaging other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or brown paper bags or in cardboard boxes.

Beans: Fava (or broad)
Pick fava beans immature, when the pods are only 6 to 8 inches long. This is when the beans are sweetest and most tender. Shell the beans before cooking them.

To dry the beans for later use, spread mature pods in a warm, dry place until the pods and the beans are completely dry. Then hull the beans and store beans in insect-proof containers.

Use Storage Method 1 for fresh beans. Beans will store 0 to 7 days.

Pumpkins
Allow pumpkins to ripen fully on the vine. A pumpkin ready to harvest will have a hard rind and mature seeds. The stem will turn from green to tan and become “corky” looking. Leave a short stem attached, as pumpkins do not store well without stems. The part of the fruit touching the soil will be cream to orange. Harvest before the first heavy freeze.

Nutrition note: One medium baked sweet potato contains 171 calories and 3.4 grams of fiber. It is an excellent source of vitamin A (498% DV) and C (47% DV). Color yellow/orange.

Potatoes: Other
Northern types of sweet potatoes will mature in Idaho. Dig roots in late September or early October. Handle roots carefully and do not bruise them or scrape the skin.

Storage Conditions
The best storage conditions depend on characteristics of the vegetable and plant part harvested for use. Ideal storage conditions are described in terms of the temperature and humidity of the storage area. Often the exact conditions won’t be available. In those cases, locate the best approximate conditions and improvise to improve them. A refrigerator, basement, cellar or garage, attic, outbuilding, or under-the-house crawlspace are all possible storage locations. Containers and packaging such as plastic bags, mesh bags, boxes, and paper sacks can modify storage conditions. Some vegetables can be packed in damp or dry sand, soil, or sawdust to improve storage conditions. If you’d like to build your own storage unit, your local extension educator can provide plans for low-cost structures. Some vegetables cannot be stored with other vegetables because they will flavor them. For example, onions and garlic can be stored together but not in close proximity to other vegetables. Cross-transfer of odors can be avoided by NOT storing carrots with onions or cabbage with potatoes or other root crops.

Methods of Storage
Method 1: Cold, moist storage—32–40°F, 95% relative humidity. The colder part of a refrigerator generally provides this range of temperatures. To maintain a high relative humidity, place vegetables in plastic bags or place them unbagged in the crisper, which should be half or more full. With all moist storage methods, if vegetables need to be drained, drain them before storing them. Remove excess water or allow it to evaporate.

Method 2: Cool, moist storage—45–50°F, 80–90% relative humidity. A special refrigerator kept at these warmer temperatures may be warranted for storing large amounts of vegetables. Vegetables needing this type of storage are sensitive to chilling injury at temperatures below 45°F. Storing certain immature vegetables under these conditions will allow ripening that would not occur at a lower temperature. Vegetables should be in plastic bags or in the crisper (as in method 1) to maintain the humidity of the surrounding air.

Method 3: Cold, dry storage—35–35°F, 50–60% relative humidity. Use cool rooms and buildings. Pack vegetables in something other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or brown paper bags or in cardboard boxes. If you wash the vegetables before storing them, dry them thoroughly before placing them in storage. A little dry dirt is not a storage problem, however; you can clean the produce just before use.

Method 4: Warm, moist storage—55–60°F, 80–85% relative humidity. Basement areas, garages, and semi-heated outbuildings, combined with plastic bags or damp soil, sand, or sawdust, often satisfy these conditions.

Method 5: Warm, dry storage—55–60°F, 60–70% relative humidity. Store in basement areas, garages, and semi-heated outbuildings in packaging other than plastic to maintain reduced humidity levels, such as in mesh or brown paper bags or in cardboard boxes.

Asparagus
Wait until the third year after planting crowns to harvest asparagus. For the first harvest, limit your picking to no longer than 1 month. The plants are still expanding their root and storage systems, and excessive removal of spears will weaken the plants. In following years, extend the harvest but stop when spears become less than 1/2 inch in diameter.

Harvest spears 5 to 8 inches in length by cutting or snapping them off. To cut a spear, run a knife under the ground where the spear emerges. Since the cut will be below the point of fiber development, it will still be necessary to snap the stem before cooking. Cutting may damage some spear tips that have not emerged. That is why many horticulturists recommend snapping. To snap a spear, bend it from the top toward the ground. The spear will break at the point where it is free of fiber. Spear diameter is not related to tenderness. Asparagus spears are good fresh, frozen, or canned.

Use Storage Method 1. Packing the stems in moist toweling or resting the ends in a little water will restore or maintain freshness. Asparagus is still growing when harvested, so spears must be placed in an upright position to keep them from growing crooked. Average storage life is 1 to 3 weeks.

Nutrition note: 1/2 cup cooked asparagus contains 22 calories and 1.4 grams of fiber. Asparagus is an excellent source of folate (33% DV) and a good source of vitamin C (16% DV) and A (10% DV). Color green, purple.
Introduction

Vegetables are grown in Idaho at elevations ranging from 1,000 feet to more than 6,000 feet. An accurate general prediction of harvest dates from time of planting is impossible because Idaho’s climates differ so greatly. Furthermore, harvest dates differ from season to season, with the type of vegetable, and even with the cultivar (variety) of a certain type of vegetable. Yet, harvesting at the proper stage of maturity is essential for peak flavor and nutrition. Vegetables are still alive after harvest; they are still respiring and breaking down cellular contents to provide energy to live. All successful storage regimes retard the rate of respiration and hence the rate at which the vegetables degenerate.

Harvest and Storing

Harvest vegetables in the morning when they are likely to be at their coolest and will take handling better. Vegetables with waxy, waterproof skins requiring cool storage can be pre-treated in ice water to quickly remove the field heat (heat in the vegetable at harvest). Avoid bruising or otherwise damaging the vegetables to minimize decay during storage. Vegetable quality deteriorates rapidly after harvest. Keep fresh produce out of direct sunlight and cook, process, or place it in the proper storage conditions as soon as possible.

Harvesting and Storing

Fresh Garden Vegetables

Radishes

Radishes grow quickly, a factor that contributes to a mild flavor and crisp texture. If growth slows for any reason or if the radish becomes overmature, it will become spongy or woody and have a pungent, hot flavor.

Nutrition note:

- Radishes make a great low-calorie snack.
- Use Storage Method 1. Wash and cool radishes immediately. They will keep for 3 to 4 weeks.

Squash: Summer

Harvest summer squash before the seeds enlarge and harden. Fruits will be small, tender, and sweet with a skin that can be punctured with a fingernail. Zucchini and other cylindrical summer squash should be 6 to 8 inches long when picked. Scallops should be 3 to 4 inches in diameter. Summer squash develop quickly, and daily or every-other-day harvest will catch fruit at the ripe stage. Remove all overmature fruit to encourage continued flowering and fruit production.

Use Storage Method 2. Summer squash keeps 5 to 14 days.

Rutabagas

Rutabagas will stand some frost but should be dug before the ground freezes. The root should be 3 to 5 inches in diameter to be mildly flavored and tender. Rutabagas that are overmature or come from drought-stressed plants will be tough and woody. Harvest in late September or as needed for meals.

Use Storage Method 1. Rutabagas keep well under refrigeration, in an outdoor pit, or in an underground cellar. They will emit odors during storage. Storage is possible for 2 to 4 months.

Nutrition note:

- Use 1/2 cup cooked rutabagas contains 33 calories and 1.5 grams fiber and is an excellent source of vitamin C (27% DV). Color = yellow/orange.

Shallots

Shallot plants (tops and bulbs) can be eaten in the green stage. At maturity, the leaves begin to yellow and die down, and the bulbs reach their maximum size. Stop irrigating, as plants should mature in dry soil. Dig the shallot plants when the tops have died and lay them out of direct sunlight (to prevent sunburn) to dry and cure for 3 to 4 weeks leaving the tops attached. Before storing, cut or remove dried tops 1/2 to 1 inch above the bulb, remove any loose dirt, and trim the roots. Do not remove any of the protective, dry skin from the dried shallot.

Use Storage Method 3. Cure shallots during a warm, dry storage period of 2 to 3 months. After that, move shallots to long-term storage. Cured shallots will store for 1 to 8 months.

Nutrition note:

- Use 1/4 cup chopped raw shallots contains 29 calories and small amounts of vitamins A (9.5% DV) and C (5.3% DV). Color = white/tau/brown.

Follow the Vegetable Rainbow

Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that individuals eat at least three servings of vegetables a day. One serving is 1/2 cup cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw.

The vegetables you eat should look like a rainbow on your plate. The National Cancer Institute recommends eating blue, red, yellow, orange, purple, and white vegetables. All of the different colors found in vegetables contain different phytochemicals (substances found in plants) that may protect against some diseases.

Blue-purple vegetables contain phytochemicals called anthocyanins and phenolics. Their health benefits include

- A healthy heart
- Vision health
- A healthy immune system
- A lower risk of some cancers

Red vegetables contain phytochemicals called lycopene and anthocyanins. Their health benefits include

- A healthy heart
- Memory function
- A lower risk of some cancers
- Urinary tract health

Percent Daily Value (% DV) provides an estimate of how individual foods contribute to the total diet. Foods that are an “excellent source” of a particular nutrient provide 20% or more of the daily value. Foods that are a “good source” of a particular nutrient provide between 10 and 19% of the daily value.

White vegetables: Vegetables that fall in this category include white, tan, and brown vegetables that contain phytochemicals called allin, found in the garlic and onion family, and the mineral selenium, found in mushrooms. Including these vegetables in your diet helps maintain

- Heart health
- Cholesterol levels that are already healthy
- A lower risk of some cancers
Harvesting and Storing Fresh Garden Vegetables

Squash: Winter
Allow winter squash to ripen fully on the vine. A squash ready to harvest will have a hard rind, which a fingernail will not pierce. The skin will lose its luster and appear dull. The stem will turn from green to tan and be "corky" looking. The bottom of the fruit touching soil will be cream to orange. Leave a short stem on the harvested fruit to prolong its storage life. Harvest before the first heavy freeze.

Use Storage Method 5. Cure winter squash at 80 to 85°F and 90 to 95% relative humidity for 10 days before placing them into long-term storage. Scatter the squash rather than storing them in a pile. Winter squash will store for 2 to 6 months. Do not cure acorn squash, as curing will toughen them. Use storage method 3 for acorn squash. They will keep only 1 to 2 months in storage.

Nutrition note: ½ cup cooked winter squash, all varieties, contains 40 calories and 2.9 grams of fiber. It is an excellent source of vitamin A (73% DV), a good source of vitamin C (16% DV), and a smaller source of folate (7% DV). Color = yellow/orange.

Turnips
Harvest in late September or as needed for meals. Turnips are mild and tender when they are medium-sized—no more than 2 to 3 inches in diameter. Turnips tolerate light frosts but should be dug before the ground freezes. Overmature turnips will be tough and woody. Turnip greens are good when leaves are 4 to 6 inches long.

Use Storage Method 1 for greens. Turnip greens will store for 10 to 14 days.

Use Storage Method 1 for roots. Turnips keep well under refrigeration, in an outdoor pit, or in an underground cellar. They will emit odors during storage. Turnips can be stored for 4 to 5 months.

Nutrition note: ½ cup cooked turnips contains 16 calories and 1.6 grams of fiber and is a good source of vitamin C (15% DV). Color = white/tan/brown.

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