

Handling Fresh Produce

Customers will buy more produce when it is fresh, ripe and fragrant smelling. Here are a few tips on how to handle and store fresh produce to maximize shelf life and the store's profits.

Handling

- Produce that is properly stored and handled will have a longer shelf life. Store fruits and vegetables at their recommended temperature to lengthen shelf life and reduce spoilage.
- Sunlight and warm temperatures reduce produce shelf life. Try not to put produce next to windows or in warm areas of the store.
- Look for bruises, dents and mold. Remove spoiled produce quickly so it will not spread. Bruises in apples spread to other apples, and mold will spread throughout the display. Not removing spoiled inventory may keep customers from purchasing other unspoiled produce.

Rotating

- Always rotate fresh produce to maintain freshness.
- Use a FIFO method – First In First Out – Produce that comes in first should be sold first. Inform all employees of FIFO when stocking produce. Place new produce behind or under the current stock.

Storing

- The way produce is stored and displayed affects how fast it will ripen. If stored improperly, fruits and vegetables will spoil quickly, and the store could lose profit.
- Certain food items should be kept separately because they produce or are sensitive to ethylene gases which speed food ripening and spoilage.
- Do not store produce that are ethylene producing with produce that are ethylene sensitive.

Ethylene producing	Apples, cantaloupe, pears, peppers, bananas, peaches, avocados, and tomatoes
Ethylene sensitive	Apples, grapes, lemons, limes, pears, broccoli, carrots, cucumbers, lettuce, peppers, squash, bananas, mango, peaches, onions, avocados

- Do not store produce in bags or sealed containers. This will trap gases and lead to over ripening.

Selling by weight vs. per unit

- Selling in larger quantities by weight can help sell products more quickly and make more money.
- Some items are great to sell per-unit, especially to kids, like individual apples, bananas & oranges.
- Store owner should always know how much the per-unit price is in case someone wants to buy a smaller quantity. Per-unit price is calculated by adding a mark-up to store's cost.

