



Selecting Fresh Fruits

Choose fresh fruit that they are in season to help insure you get the best tasting and highest quality fruit. When buying fresh fruits, buy only what you will use within a few days. Wash fruit thoroughly with clean, cool, running water just before it is prepared or eaten. The following chart will help you select the best fresh fruit. **See “Calendar of Best Buys - Fresh Fruits and Vegetables” on page 15 of the NEP *Food Preparation Manual* for a list of when fruits and vegetables are in season.**

Fruit	Buy	Avoid
Apples	Apples should be firm and crisp.	Apples that are soft are overripe and should not be purchased.
Avocado	Skin may be rough or smooth, green, brown or purplish-black, based on the variety. If it is to be used that day, pick those that are a little soft.	Dark, sunken spots or cracked surfaces are signs of spoilage. The “meat” of the avocado will turn brown when exposed to air. To avoid this, peel just before using. Adding lemon or lime juice to cut and/or peeled avocados will reduce browning.
Bananas	Select those that have a firm, bright color and no bruises on the skin. Peak ripeness is when the bananas are solid yellow with brown specks.	Do not buy bananas with bruised or decaying skin. Very ripe bananas may be cheaper and can be used in baking or frozen for use in smoothies.
Blueberries	Select berries that are plump and dark blue in color. Berries should be similar in size, dry, and free from stems or leaves.	Do not buy berries that are soft, mushy or are leaking. Berries have a natural protective coating, so it is best not to wash them until they are ready to be eaten.
Cantaloupes	Ripe cantaloupe will have thick veins across the surface and a good cantaloupe smell. These should not be a stem.	Avoid cantaloupes that are very soft, have mold where the stem had been, and/or large bruises.
Grapes	Grapes should be plump, well colored and firmly attached to the stem.	Avoid soft or wrinkled grapes and grapes with stems that are brown and brittle. Avoid grapes that are leaking.
Honeydew Melons	Ripe honeydew melon will have a velvet-like texture, nice fruit smell, and yellowish-white to creamy white color.	Fruits that are hard and either pure white or greenish in color are too young. Avoid fruits with large bruises and cuts.

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Kiwi Fruit	Unwrinkled fruit that is firm or gives slightly to pressure is ready to eat.	Those that are very soft, wrinkled or that have mold are overripe.
Lemons/Limes	Select those with firm, smooth skin and rich yellow color. Shiny skin and heavy weight indicate ripeness.	Do not buy those with dull, dry skin. This is a sign they are old. If the skin is wrinkled, it is not fresh. Soft spots are often signs of decay.
Nectarines	The fruit should be plump, but slightly soft along the “seam”. Color should be a rich orange-yellow with red.	Hard fruits that were picked too early will be dull in color.
Oranges/Grapefruits	Select firm heavy fruit with fresh, bright looking and smooth skin. Those with thin skins often have more juice than thick-skinned fruits. Surface scarring has no effect on internal quality.	Avoid lightweight oranges that have a rough, dull, dry or spongy skin. Grapefruits lacking a bright color or having a soft tender peel that breaks when pressure is applied are old.
Peaches	A good peach should give slightly to pressure. Look for a golden or creamy yellow background color. A red color does not mean the fruit is ripe.	Peaches that are very hard and green were picked too soon and probably won’t ripen. Do not buy peaches that have large flat bruises.
Pears	Pears should be firm. Desired color will depend on the variety of pear.	Do not buy pears that are soft/mushy, wrinkled or have a dull color.
Pineapples	Ripe pineapples have a yellow color with a good aroma. They are firm and heavy for their size.	Avoid pineapples with a sunken peel, dull yellow color or dried look. Avoid those with bruises, soft spots and mold.
Plums	Ripe plums are a little soft. Color depends on the variety.	Very hard fruits, those that have breaks in the skin or skin that is wrinkled should not be purchased.
Strawberries	Pick strawberries that have a full red color. Small and medium-sized berries are often better for eating than larger ones.	Berries that are soft, wrinkled, moldy, or have large uncolored areas should not be purchased.
Tangerines	A fresh tangerine will be deep yellow or orange in color.	Avoid those that have a pale yellow or green color, cuts in the skin or very soft spots.
Watermelons	Select melons that are firm. Other signs of a ripe melon are a smooth surface, rounded ends, and a cream colored “belly”. The flesh should be dark red. Thumping is not a reliable method.	Do not buy melons that are lightweight or have dents or bruises.

Source: How to Buy Fresh Fruits, Home and Garden Bulletin 260, www.ams.usda.gov/howtobuy/ffruit.htm