



FRESHFARM PRODUCE 101

A short guide to identifying, storing, and preparing vegetables



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WINTER SQUASH

STORAGE TIPS: Winter squash do best when kept in a cool, dark place like a cabinet, drawer, or pantry shelf. Be sure to refrigerate after cutting.

HOW TO PREP: Cut in half and scoop out seeds. Seeds can be separated from the pulp, rinsed, dried, and then roasted to make a crunchy snack.



ACORN SQUASH

APPEARANCE: Dark green exterior with a pale orange or yellow interior.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 350°F, cut the squash into wedges or semi-circles, drizzle with olive oil, and season with your favorite seasonings. Place pieces face down in a baking dish with about 2 Tbs of water and roast for 25–35 minutes or until tender.

SAUTÉ: Cut in half, scoop out the seeds, cut into 1 inch thick semicircles, place in a pan over medium heat with butter, flip once the sides turn brown.



SPAGHETTI SQUASH

APPEARANCE: Yellow or pale orange exterior with a pale yellow interior.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 350°F, cut the squash into wedges or semi-circles, drizzle with olive oil, and season with your favorite seasonings. Place pieces face down in a baking dish with about 2 Tbs of water and roast for 25–35 minutes or until tender. Use a fork to gently fluff out the stringy flesh. Top with tomato sauce or your favorite pasta toppings and enjoy!



BUTTERNUT SQUASH

APPEARANCE: Beige exterior with an orange interior.

ROAST: Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut the peeled squash into 1-inch cubes. Transfer to a large, rimmed baking sheet. Toss with oil, salt and pepper, and fresh, chopped herbs. Spread out in a single layer. Roast, tossing occasionally, until tender (but not mushy) and golden brown, up to 25–35 minutes.



DELICATA SQUASH

APPEARANCE: Orange or yellow speckled exterior with green stripes with a pale yellow interior.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut the squash into wedges or semi-circles or cut in half lengthwise into boats, drizzle with olive oil, and season with your favorite seasonings. Place pieces face down in a baking dish with about 2 Tbs of water and bake for 25–35 minutes or until tender. If cut into boats, stuff with rice and meat or eat as is.

Unlike many other winter squash, Delicata has a skin that's edible and delicious.

ROOT VEGETABLES

STORAGE TIPS: Most root vegetables (beets, carrots, radishes, and turnips) last longer with their leafy green tops removed. Store the roots in the vegetable drawer of your refrigerator. Save the beet and turnip tops and cook the same way you would dark, leafy greens.

HOW TO PREP: Since root vegetables grow underground, be sure to scrub them well, then peel the outer layer of skin if you plan to enjoy them raw.



BEETS

Appearance: Red, purple, or orange globe-shaped bulbs.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Cut beets into 1 ½ inch chunks, toss with olive oil, and roast for 35–40 minutes or until beets are tender when pierced with a fork.

BOIL: Cover beets with water and 1 Tbs of vinegar, bring water to a boil, drain and rinse beets with cold water. Remove the skin and slice, then season to taste.



CARROTS

APPEARANCE: Orange, yellow, purple, red, or white cone-shaped roots.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Toss carrots with olive oil, salt, and pepper and bake for 15–20 minutes, until tender but not mushy.

BOIL: Cut the carrots into ¼ inch slices, place in a saucepan, and cover with water. Boil for about 9 minutes or until soft.

EXTRA STORAGE TIP: Don't store carrots next to ethylene gas-producing fruits like pears and apples.



RADISH

APPEARANCE: Red, pink, purple or white with circular or elongated shapes.

PREPARATION: Peel and thinly slice. Use as a garnish in salads, add to soups or stews, or sauté with butter and seasonings for 2–3 minutes.



TURNIPS

APPEARANCE: A mix of purple, white, or multi-colored with a circular or elongated shape.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Peel rinsed turnips and cut into similarly sized pieces. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and any other favorite seasonings and roast for 15–20 minutes or until tender when pierced with a fork.

SAUTÉ: Dice rinsed and peeled turnips into 1-inch cubes. Sauté on medium-high heat with olive oil, garlic, and onions until tender. Add turnip greens toward the end of cooking and remove from heat once the greens are slightly wilted.

LEAFY GREENS

STORAGE TIPS: To keep leafy greens from wilting, wrap them in a damp towel and store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Do not wash before storing.

HOW TO PREP: Wash thoroughly with cold water. Chard, collards, and kale have thick stems in the middle that you should remove. The stems are edible but can sometimes have a bitter, herbaceous taste when eaten raw, so chop them into small pieces and sauté.



COLLARD GREENS

APPEARANCE: Large dark green, fan-like leaves.

SAUTÉ: Remove the coarse stalks and central rib from all the collard leaves and cut the leaves crosswise into very fine ribbons. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat, add the greens, and cook for 3–6 minutes. Continue to stir until all leaves are coated in oil and turn bright green.



SWISS CHARD

APPEARANCE: Stems can be rainbow colored—orange, yellow, pink, red, white—with bright green, wrinkled leaves.

SAUTÉ: Remove the stems and cut them into small pieces, then cut the leaves into 2-inch pieces. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large pan over medium heat, add the stems and cook for 6–8 minutes, then add the leaves, 2 tablespoons water, salt, and pepper. Cover the pan and cook for 2–4 minutes, remove the lid, and stir occasionally for 1–3 minutes.



KALE

APPEARANCE: Depending on the variety, colors can range from green or dark green to purple, with curly or bumpy leaves.

SAUTÉ: Remove the greens from the stems and chop leaves. Add oil to a pan and heat on medium-high heat until hot. Add ½ cup of stock, then add the greens and cover for 8–10 minutes until soft, stirring occasionally. Stir-fry or add to stews.

RAW: If eaten raw, massage 1 Tbsp oil into the leaves and let sit for 10 minutes until softened.



ASSORTED SALAD GREENS

APPEARANCE: Salad greens should be eaten as soon as possible. To store salad mixes, line a plastic container with a clean kitchen towel or a few paper towels and dump the greens inside.

For heads of lettuce, remove any wilted or damaged outer leaves before wrapping them in a paper towel and storing them in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator.

HERBS

STORAGE TIPS: As with leafy greens, most herbs can be wrapped in a damp paper towel and stored in a plastic bag or container. However, cilantro and parsley can also be treated like cut flowers. Simply trim the ends of your bunch of herbs and place in a jar or container with a little water in the bottom. Place a plastic bag over the herbs and store in the refrigerator until you're ready to use.

Alternatively, you can chop your fresh herbs and freeze them in ice trays covered with olive oil.



ITALIAN OR GENOVESE BASIL

This basil is most commonly used in pesto, salad dressings, homemade pasta sauce, and salads with tomatoes and vinegar.



CHIVES

Chives are tiny green onions with a concentrated onion flavor. They are delicious chopped and sprinkled over creamy soups, potato salads, or nachos, or when added to salad dressings.



CILANTRO

Cilantro is an incredibly versatile herb because it can be used in a variety of cuisines, including Latin and Asian. Use it to jazz up a salsa, curry, marinade, or fresh salad.

Cilantro can easily be confused with flat parsley. Rub a leaf between your fingers and smell. Parsley has a fresh, grassy scent, while cilantro has a much stronger, spicy, citrusy aroma.



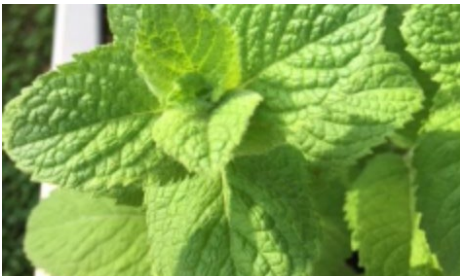
DILL

Also called dill weed, this herb can be used to make pickles and can be added to salads, soups, sauces, and marinades for a fresh, herby taste. Make your own ranch dressing, dill cream sauce, or dill pickles with this herb.

HERBS

STORAGE TIPS: As with leafy greens, most herbs can be wrapped in a damp paper towel and stored in a plastic bag or container. However, cilantro and parsley can also be treated like cut flowers. Simply trim the ends of your bunch of herbs and place in a jar or container with a little water in the bottom. Place a plastic bag over the herbs and store in the refrigerator until you're ready to use.

Alternatively, you can chop your fresh herbs and freeze them in ice trays covered with olive oil.



MINT

There are many different types of mint, which can all be used the same way. Chop and mix into fresh spring rolls or lettuce wraps; add to hot tea, mixed drinks, or yogurt parfaits; or use as a garnish for salads.



PARSLEY

Parsley can be flat, like the leaves pictured here, or curly. Use it in a variety of ways: in coleslaw dressing; in soups, stews, salads, and pasta; on top of roasted potatoes; and in hot or cold grain bowls (with quinoa, couscous, or in tabouleh salad).

Parsley is commonly confused with cilantro because of the shape of its leaves. Rub the leaves between your fingers and smell. Parsley has a fresh, grassy scent, while cilantro has a much stronger, spicy, citrusy aroma.



ROSEMARY

Rosemary is a pungent herb that pairs well with poultry, meat, and root vegetables, especially potatoes.



THAI BASIL

Thai Basil is most commonly used in Thai or Asian cuisine. Chop and add to curries, fresh spring rolls or lettuce wraps, or fried rice; or add to marinades and dressings.

STORAGE CROPS

STORAGE TIPS: Although some of these pantry staples come from different plant families, they should all be stored either on the counter or in a cool, dark place.

NOTE: Onions and potatoes should NEVER be stored together—they each release gases that cause the other to spoil faster. Although potatoes can be stored in the refrigerator, they are better off stored in a dark, cool place like a cabinet or pantry shelf.



GARLIC

APPEARANCE: Outside skin is typically white but can also have stripes of purple. Inside is fragrant and cream-colored.

PREPARATION: Separate individual cloves, using a big knife to smash the clove, then peel the skin before using.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 250°F. Peel as much garlic as you have, preferably 8–10 heads, and place in an oven-safe baking dish. Cover with ½ cup of olive oil, salt, pepper, and red chili flakes, then roast for 2 hours or until slightly browned. Put in a jar and refrigerate for up to 2 months. **DO NOT LEAVE GARLIC OIL OUT AT ROOM TEMPERATURE!**



POTATOES

APPEARANCE: Purple, red, white, or yellow with an irregular circular shape.

PREPARATION: Scrub and wash thoroughly.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 425°F. Scrub potatoes, cut into quarters, and roast for about 35 minutes

BOIL: Peel and slice potatoes into quarters, bring a pot to boil, add potatoes, and cook until tender. Drain water and mash with milk and butter over low heat.

BAKE: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Scrub potatoes, poke 8–12 holes around each, coat lightly with oil, and bake for about 1 hour.



SWEET POTATOES

APPEARANCE: Orange, white, or purple with an elongated shape.

PREPARATION: Scrub and wash thoroughly.

SAUTÉ: Cut the sweet potato into thin circles, heat a large skillet over medium-high heat with oil, reduce to medium and add the sweet potatoes. Cook for 3–4 minutes on each side with the lid on.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 425°F. Cut sweet potatoes into ½ inch chunks, drizzle with olive oil, and cook for about 30 minutes or until tender, tossing them every 10–15 minutes.



ONIONS

APPEARANCE: White, red, or yellow with an elongated, round, or flat shape.

SAUTÉ: Peel the onion and chop into small pieces. Combine with melted butter in a large pan over high heat for 4 minutes until brown, then cover and reduce to medium-low for 4–5 minutes until tender.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Peel onions and cut into chunks, drizzle with olive oil, and roast for 25–30 minutes.

SUMMER CROPS

STORAGE TIPS: All these summer crops should be stored in the refrigerator.



BELL PEPPERS

APPEARANCE: Green, red, yellow, purple, white, or striped with a bell or teardrop shape.

PREPARATION: Cut in half lengthwise and remove seeds before using.

BAKE: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut peppers in half lengthwise, remove seeds, and bake empty for 10 minutes, then stuff with cheese, rice, beans, and vegetables and bake for 10–15 minutes more.

SAUTÉ: Add oil to a skillet over medium-high heat, add strips of peppers and stir frequently until crisp and tender, about 6 minutes.



CUCUMBERS

APPEARANCE: Dark green skin with small to large cylinder shape.

PREPARATION: Wash thoroughly. Skin can be eaten or peeled.

QUICK PICKLE: Slice cucumber crosswise into ½ inch pieces. In a small bowl, mix 1 cup of water, 2 Tbsp sugar, 1 tsp salt, and ⅓ cup vinegar until sugar dissolves. Add the cucumbers and let sit in the fridge overnight before eating.

PICKLE: Slice cucumbers, sprinkle with salt, and store in a cool place until the salt dissolves. Then bring 1 cup of water and ⅓ cup vinegar to boil in a saucepan. Rinse the pickles with some of the boiling water and drain, then rinse again. Finally, put the pickles into hot jars and fill almost to the top with the water/vinegar liquid. Cool and store jars in the fridge; after 3 weeks the cucumbers will be pickled.



EGGPLANT

APPEARANCE: Dark purple, light purple, striped, or white with a long skinny or pear shape.

PREPARATION: If the eggplant is really big and the seeds are noticeable, cut into thick slices or chunks, place in a colander, and sprinkle with salt. Let sit for 30 minutes, then rinse with cold water. This process will draw out any bitter juices.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. After cutting the eggplant lengthwise or into circles, drizzle with olive oil and roast for 10–20 minutes, then flip and cook for another 10–20 minutes.

SAUTÉ: Cut the eggplant into chunks or rounds, toss with oil, and season with salt and pepper. Heat 1 Tbsp of oil in a pan on medium heat, add eggplant once oil starts to shimmer, and cook for 10 minutes or until golden brown.



SUMMER SQUASH

APPEARANCE: Green, yellow, or striped, with flat or long cylinder shape, depending on the variety.

PREPARATION: Wash thoroughly. Both the outer skin and seeds inside can be eaten.

SAUTÉ: Cut the top stem off and discard. Cut squash lengthwise in half and then into semicircles. Add to a pan with butter or oil, salt, and pepper, and cook for 10–15 minutes.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Cut the squash into desired shapes, drizzle with olive oil, and roast for 15–20 minutes.

BRASSICAS

Don't let the title intimidate you—"brassica" is just the official name for the plant family that includes these crops. There are other brassicas listed in this guide (like kale and radishes), but here are some you're likely to see throughout the seasons.

STORAGE TIPS: All these crops should be stored in the refrigerator.



BROCCOLI

APPEARANCE: Green or purple florets with a thick, light green stalk.

PREPARATION: Using a paring knife, first cut the florets off the top of the broccoli, then cut them into smaller uniform pieces. Remove the tough outer skin from the stalk, and slice the stalk crosswise into small disks.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 425°F. Toss broccoli with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and bake for 15–30 minutes.

STEAM: Fill a saucepan with a few inches of water and place steamer basket inside, bring water to a simmer at medium-high heat, and place broccoli in the steamer basket. Steam for 4–5 minutes before draining and rinsing with cold water.



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

APPEARANCE: Green with balloon-shaped bulbs; typically come as individual loose buds but can also come attached to a larger stalk.

PREPARATION: Trim the base of each Brussels sprout and remove any discolored leaves before slicing or shredding.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Cut the stems off the Brussels sprouts, then cut the bud in half, drizzle with olive oil, and roast for 35–40 minutes.

SAUTÉ: Cut buds in half lengthwise. Heat 2 Tbsp oil in a large skillet then add Brussels sprouts, and cook until golden.



CABBAGE

APPEARANCE: Green or reddish-purple with a large circular shape.

PREPARATION: Remove any discolored or rough outer leaves. Cut the cabbage down the middle. Place each half cut-side down on a cutting board and slice down the middle again. Locate the thick stem at the bottom of each piece and remove it.

BOIL: Shred cabbage and add to soup. Cook until tender while the soup is at a boil, about 3–4 minutes.

SAUTÉ: Cut in half lengthwise and then cut into lengthwise slivers. Add butter and oil to a large pan on medium heat, add cabbage and cook until tender and golden brown.

FOR COLESLAW: Cut into quarters and remove the core, then thinly slice each quarter. On the side, mix mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, salt, and pepper, then add the mixture to the cabbage.



CAULIFLOWER

APPEARANCE: Orange, purple, or white florets with light green leaves attached to the base.

PREPARATION: Using a paring knife, first cut the florets off the top of the cauliflower and then cut them into smaller uniform pieces. Remove the tough outer skin from the stalk and slice the stalk crosswise into small disks.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 425°F. Toss cauliflower with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and bake for 15–30 minutes.

STEAM: Fill a saucepan with a few inches of water and place steamer basket inside, bring water to a simmer at medium-high heat, and place cauliflower in the steamer basket. Steam for 4–5 minutes before draining and rinsing with cold water.

LESS FAMILIAR PRODUCE

These crops tend to be unfamiliar and slightly intimidating to many of our customers and clients. They can all be stored in the refrigerator and easily prepared.



BOK CHOY

APPEARANCE: Deep green leaves with a thick, white base.

PREPARATION: Wash bok choy and cut the leaves away from the stalks.

SAUTÉ: Slice bok choy in half lengthwise. Heat ginger, garlic, chopped onions, and oil in a skillet on medium heat. When skillet is hot, place bok choy face down until slightly brown on each side.

BOIL: Bok choy is a great addition to soups.



KOHLRABI

APPEARANCE: Green, purple, or white with a flat, bulb-shaped base attached to leafy stems.

PREPARATION: Cut the leaves off from the head (these can be cooked like kale). Slice the head in half down the center, place the halves flat side down, and cut into quarters. Using a knife or vegetable peeler, remove and discard the skin.

RAW: Kohlrabi is delicious eaten raw in a salad or with dips.



FENNEL

APPEARANCE: Green tops with fragrant, white bulbs.

PREPARATION: Trim the stalk, cut the bulb in half, and peel off any wilted outer layers.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Separate the bulb from the stem, cut the bulb into wedges, toss with olive oil, and roast in the oven for ~40 minutes.

SAUTÉ: In a medium skillet, warm 1 Tbsp oil. Cut leaves off the fennel, then slice the bulb vertically. Next, cut into thin horizontal slices, add the fennel to the pan, and stir until tender and golden.

RAW: Slice and enjoy in salads.



OKRA

APPEARANCE: Long, fuzzy, slender-shaped pods in green or purple.

PREPARATION: Okra is known for its slimy texture. Here are tips to help reduce the sliminess:

- Keep the pods whole.
- Use acids—lemon juice, tomatoes, vinegar, etc.
- Cook on high heat.
- Slice and soak in ice water before using.
- Embrace the sliminess by throwing okra in a stew (like jambalaya) as a thickening agent!
- Fry it.

OKRA STORAGE TIP: Place okra inside a paper bag before storing in the fridge.



RHUBARB

APPEARANCE: Long, thick stems in green, pink and red.

PREPARATION: Cut stems into chunks, sprinkle with sugar, cover with foil, and bake in a 350°F oven for about 15 minutes. OR cut into sticks, sprinkle with sugar, simmer with a splash of water for 8 minutes until soft. Cook longer to create a puree.

NOTE: Rhubarb leaves are NOT safe to eat. If you ever receive rhubarb with the leaves still attached, be sure to remove and discard them immediately.

LESS FAMILIAR PRODUCE

These crops tend to be unfamiliar and slightly intimidating to many of our customers and clients. They can all be stored in the refrigerator—except for tomatillos, which can be stored on the counter—and all can be easily prepared.



ASPARAGUS

(Place stems in a jar of water and store in the fridge.)

APPEARANCE: A mix of green and purple long stalks.

PREPARATION: Wash thoroughly. Break off any tough ends by snapping asparagus at the base. Stalks will naturally snap where they become woody.

ROAST: Preheat the oven to 425°F. Drizzle asparagus with olive oil. Spread in a single layer on a baking sheet and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast for 10–15 minutes, until tender but still crisp.

BOIL: Put in salted, boiling water for 3 minutes until tender.



GARLIC SCAPE

APPEARANCE: Thick, curly green stems with small light-green-to yellow bulb.

PREPARATION: Trim the ends and tips of the scapes before using.

SAUTÉ: Over medium heat, warm 1 Tbsp butter in a skillet. Add scapes, along with salt and pepper, stir for 3–5 minutes, add 1 Tbsp of water, and cover for 5 minutes. When ready, the scapes should be crisp and tender.



GREEN ONIONS

(Scallions)

APPEARANCE: Hollow, fragrant green stems with a small, edible white base.

PREPARATION: Cut the root off from the bottom and use both the white stem and leafy green top.

SAUTÉ: Heat oil in a skillet. Separate the white stem from the leafy greens, cut the white part into thin circles, and add to the pan once hot. Cook until soft and golden, then add the greens and stir until wilted. Perfect base for fried rice, or topping for potato salad or soup.



TOMATILLOS

(Store on the counter.)

APPEARANCE: A papery outer skin, or husk, with a light green globe-shaped fruit inside.

PREPARATION: Remove the husks and rinse tomatillos before using. Cut and puree in salsas, boil for about 10 minutes then add to sauces or chili, or sauté over medium heat in oil until soft.



RAMPS

APPEARANCE: Similar to green onions, ramps have green tops with an edible white base.

PREPARATION: Rinse well and trim the bottoms before using.

WAYS TO ENJOY: Add to pesto, or sear in a skillet for 1–3 minutes until lightly charred and tender. OR preheat the oven to 350°F, toss ramps in olive oil, and roast for 15–17 minutes.

FRESHFARM is a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, that works to create a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food future. We develop innovative ways to solve critical problems across our regional food system and connect people to their food through hands-on education, farmers markets, and food distribution programs.

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