



Top 20 Produce Items

Self-Directed
Study Guide

Part One: Basic Concepts





How To Use This Workbook

The purpose of this workbook series is to provide you with knowledge, skill and ability on a wide range of subjects related to your produce department. To ensure the best learning retention this workbook is constructed in two parts; Basic Concepts, and Fact Sheets and Exercises. There is also a helpful Top 20 Study Quiz available to help you retain some of the key concepts found in the product Fact Sheets. Please identify who your mentor will be for this program and note your start date below:

Mentor Name: _____ Start Date: _____

If you have more than one mentor or trainer, please list them all below. Any one of these individuals are capable of signing-off on your work. Refer to the individual directly responsible for your training for more information.

You will need to complete all of the exercises and work activities and have your mentor sign and date the Certification Checklist at the end of this guide. This way, all parties will know that you have successfully completed the learning exercises and have achieved the applied level of knowledge, skill and ability required to execute your job effectively.



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What You Will Learn



Learning Objectives

This course is geared toward providing you with the skills required to ensure product quality and customer satisfaction through effective handling of the twenty top-selling products in the produce industry (Top 20 Produce Items). After completing the readings and exercises in this workbook you will be able to do the following:

Master the basics – name the Top 20 Produce Items

Product knowledge starts off by learning the fundamental aspects of each top-selling product. This includes product names, popular varieties, ethylene sensitivity, odor sensitivity, seasonal availability, basic handling and customer tips.

Describe the Best Practices for receiving, storing and merchandising the Top 20 items

You will be challenged to demonstrate your ability to ensure quality throughout the inventory and sales cycle of these core produce items. This starts with receiving quality products from the truck, storing them at the right temperature and humidity levels, and displaying the items for your customers using the operating standards for merchandising established by your company.



Receiving



Storing



Displaying



What You Will Learn



Address common questions that customers have and offer knowledgeable solutions and tips

By developing a strong understanding of your core produce items, you offer value to customers. Many times, customers will not know how to properly handle produce items to protect their natural texture and flavor, nor how to extend the freshness and shelf life of items they purchase and take home.



Describe the continual, on-the-job learning tasks needed to retain and strengthen your knowledge

Once your learning mentor has signed all Top 20 items on your Certification Checklist you will be ready to build upon your knowledge. Your next development steps will be outlined by your manager and/or mentor in the Development Plan at the back of this guide book.

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Top 20 Produce Items: Fruits



Here are items among the Top 20 list classified as fruits:

Apples

Avocados

Bananas

Berries

Cherries

Cucumbers

Grapes

Melons

Oranges

Peaches

Tomatoes

DEFINITION

Fruit: the seed-bearing structure on plants formed from the ovary after flowering.



Top 20 Produce Items: Vegetables

Here are items among the Top 20 list classified as vegetables:

Broccoli

Carrots

Celery

Lettuce/Bagged Salads

Mushrooms

Onions

Peppers

Potatoes

Squash

DEFINITION

Vegetable: any edible part of a plant – aside from its seed-bearing fruit – including seeds, stems, stalks, leaves, roots and tubers.

Definition of Key Terms



On the next page you are presented with a brief glossary of common produce industry terms that are used throughout your Fact Sheet readings and exercises (in Part Two of this guide). You will also use these terms to complete a crossword puzzle.

Air-stacking – Stacking boxes by staggering them, with lids removed from boxes and exposed to air to slow ripening. This is also called stagger-stacking.

Bloom – A hazy, white coating which is part of the natural defense mechanism on some fruit. Bloom is NOT mold and is not a sign of deterioration. Bloom is perfectly natural and is not an indication of ripeness or flavor, so there is no need to try to wash or wipe it off.

Brix – A measurement of the amount of sugar in a fruit or vegetable. The higher the brix count, the sweeter the fruit or vegetable.

BIUB (Best If Used By) – A date when the flavor or texture of a food will begin to decline. The freshness, taste, and nutrients of the fruit or vegetable may no longer be retained beyond this date. Often found on packaged items like bagged produce and lettuces.

Calyx – The hull or leafy cap on a fruit or vegetable. The calyx of a strawberry is on top and should be bright green and not wilted. The calyx of an apple is opposite the stem and usually brownish in color. Other fruits and vegetables may also have a calyx.

Cull – To remove any produce item(s) that are off-condition, unsalable or are starting to deteriorate.

Drupelets – Tiny individual sections of fruit, each with its own seed, that are connected and surround a central core to make up a raspberry or blackberry.

FIFO (First In, First Out) – A method of accounting for inventory in which the merchandise purchased first is assumed to be sold completely before items purchased later are sold.

Oxidation – The process of fruit flesh becoming discolored when cut and exposed to air.

Plan-O-Gram – A department, shelf or display schematic for allocating products by the number of facings and/or depth of display.

Regreening – Occurs when the skin color of citrus fruit begins to turn from the ripened color back to green while still on the tree or vine. Regreening is a natural occurrence and does not affect the flavor quality.

Russetting – A rough brown spot on the skin of some produce. It does NOT affect the flavor.

Shatter – Grapes that separate from the bunch and end up rolling around in the carton or in the display case.

EXAMPLES

At least every two hours, make a quick pass through the apple displays to **cull** products of unacceptable quality. This will give your display great visual appeal.

The inside flesh of an apple turns brown from **oxidation** when exposed to air.

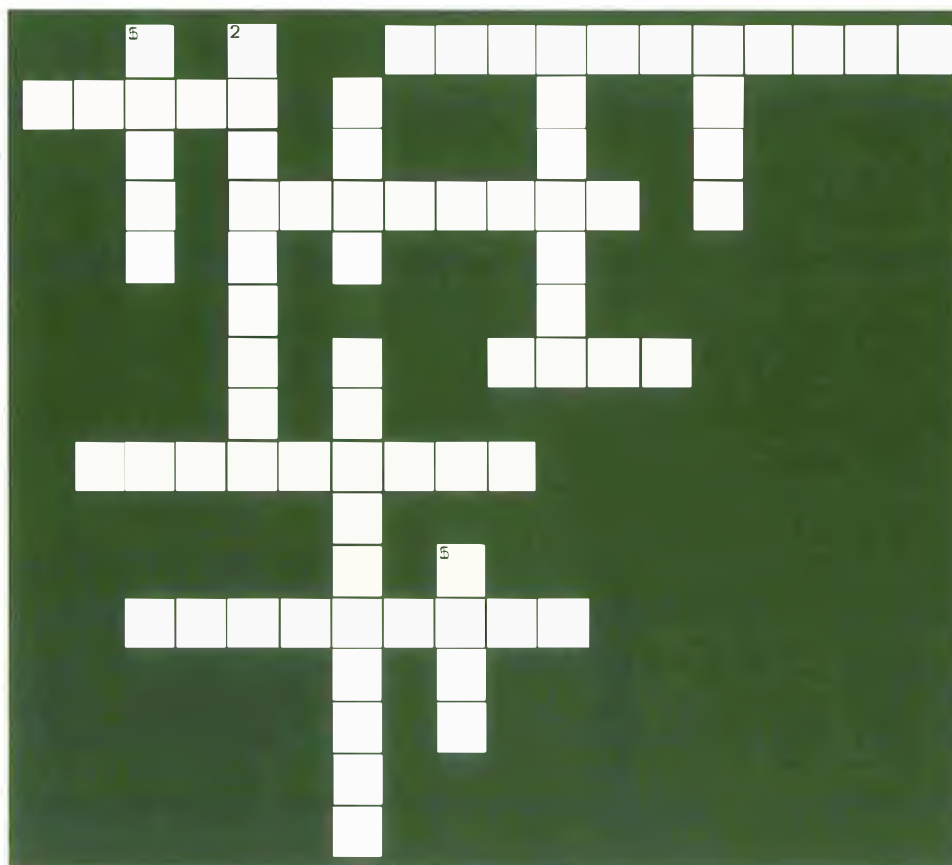
The placement of merchandise that is arriving to the store can be planned out on paper by using a **Plan-O-Gram** before the products actually arrive in the store.

Regreening occurs as chlorophyll from the orange tree builds up and is brought out in the skin of the orange.



Crossword: Key Produce Definitions

Instructions: Use the across and down questions in the table below to fill out the crossword puzzle below.



	Down		Across
1	A hazy, white coating which is part of the natural defense mechanism on some fruit.	1	The hull or leafy cap on a fruit or vegetable.
2	The process of fruit flesh becoming discolored when cut and exposed to air.	2	Individual tiny sections of a fruit, each with its own seed. Refers most often to raspberries and blackberries.
3	An acronym that refers to a product's expiration date.	3	A shelf, display or department schematic. Helps produce managers and clerks ensure the proper layout for the department.
4	Occurs when the skin color of citrus fruit begins to turn from the ripened color back to its unripe color while still on the tree or vine.	4	A rough brown spot on the skin of some produce.
5	An acronym which refers to the proper rotation practice for all produce items.	5	A method of staggering case boxes with the lids off to slow ripening.
6	This can happen to a bunch of grapes as they separate from the stems.	6	Refers to the measured level of sugar that exists within fruits and vegetables.
7	Refers to the regular practice of removing unsalable items from a display.		

Product Handling Table



Below is a helpful reference table for looking up critical handling facts about the Top 20 Produce Items. You will learn more specifics in the Fact Sheets and Exercises section of this guide.

	Ethylene Producer	Ethylene Sensitive	Odor Producer	Odor Sensitive	Ripens After Harvest	Misting
FRUIT						
Apples	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
Avocados	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Bananas	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
Berries	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Cherries	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
Cucumbers	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Grapes	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Melons	YES	SOME	NO	NO	NO	NO
Oranges	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Peaches	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
Tomatoes	YES	SOME	NO	NO	YES	NO
VEGETABLE						
Broccoli	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Carrots	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Celery	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Lettuce	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Mushrooms	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
Onions	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Peppers	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Potatoes	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Squash	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

On the next page you will notice an interview exercise. In order to explore the issues related to product handling, ask your manager to schedule some time with you to discuss the topics on the table above, along with other store-specific issues related to produce handling.

To learn more about the issues related to the proper handling of produce, interview your manager using the following questions as a script.



Interview Your Manager: Product Handling

Q: How does ethylene gas impact produce? What does ethylene-producing and ethylene-sensitive refer to?

Q: What systems and procedures do we have in place to manage the effects of ethylene gas?

Q: What systems and procedures do we use to keep odor-producing products (like onions) separated from other items that are sensitive to odors?

Q: What are the most important aspects of produce handling that our team is focused on right now? What can I do to best support our produce department goals?

Common Customer Questions



On every shift you work customers will arrive to the produce department with questions about produce and the location of items being sold outside of the department too. In order to be fully prepared, you will need to be able to answer questions related to all of the following categories:

Seasonality – Today, this does not only refer to harvest times or general availability of a product. Seasonality also refers to questions about times of peak flavor, quality and the best times of the year for price.

Location of a product or product display in the store – Includes more than the location of produce items, but also any item sold throughout your store. As a best practice, always walk the customer directly to the item, do not point toward a location in the store, nor verbally describe the location.

Nutritional information – Customers often inquire about a particular aspect of nutrition they are interested in (for example, which fruits are really high in antioxidants or how many fat calories does an avocado have).

Prepping (ways to cut, peel and prepare the item) – Consider that some fruits and veggies require prep knowledge before the item can be easily eaten such as removing inedible parts like coring a pineapple.

Recipe ideas – Always check to see what recipes are available in your department. Many produce managers keep cook books and recipes sent from the marketing department.

Proper storage and handling – Customers can get frustrated when produce goes south on them in a few days, but often this is because they do not know how to properly store their produce. It is easy to pick up on this in conversation and win them over as a life-long customer.

GREAT JOB!

You have finished your overview of the basic concepts, and are now ready to start learning about all twenty specific fruits and vegetables that make up the top selling items in the produce industry.

Part Two: Fact Sheets and Exercises



The Three-step Certification Process



Completing your training requires a three-step process for each produce commodity (each item). In order to fulfill the learning objectives you are required to be certified by your manager on each of the Top 20 products. The process for certification of each product is very similar:

Read through the Product Fact Sheet

You will find a fact sheet section for each product, starting in alphabetical order with Apples. However, the actual sequence that you complete this course should always be up to your manager. This means you are to which product(s) you should focus on as a priority. Eventually, you will need to go through all twenty in order to complete this training. It is not going to happen overnight; it will take you months to finish the entire sequence. To help you learn the specific facts and details of each produce item, go through the Top 20 Study Quiz Questions and answer key to test your knowledge.



Complete the exercises at the end of the Product Fact Sheet

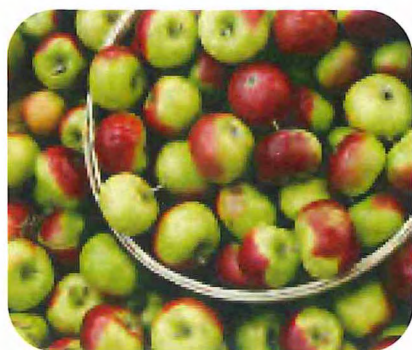
There are always two exercises at the end of each fact sheet. The first exercise always involves merchandising the product, which includes re-building all of the displays related to the product. Some products may have two, or even three different displays, depending on the number of varieties and the amount of cross-merchandising involved. The second exercise always involves receiving and storing the product. This means ensuring proper temperature from truck to shelf, proper stacking and general handling issues unique to that product.



Have your manager sign the exercises and initial the Top 20 Checklist

As you finish each set of exercises for a given produce item, have your manager sign and validate that the exercises were completed in a satisfactory manner. As you finish each product, make sure you keep track of your overall progress on the Top 20 Certification Checklist.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Apples

Overview

Apples are one of the most popular, versatile staples in any produce section. Their many colors and shiny appearance makes them a centerpiece of produce departments all year-round. They are low in calories, fat-free, sodium-free, and cholesterol-free. They are also an excellent source of fiber and are high in antioxidants. Here are some key concepts for apples.



Availability All Year

The major varieties of apples are available year-round; however, there may be a wide range of seasonal varieties in your store.



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Apples are sensitive to ethylene gas, which can hasten the ripening process and lead to over-ripe products.



Ethylene-producer Yes

Apples produce ethylene gas while in storage, which can effect the ripening of other produce items that are sensitive to ethylene gas.



Odor-sensitive Yes

Apples are sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.



Odor-producer No

Apples do not produce odors that could effect other produce items.



Misting No

Apples should not be misted while stored or while being displayed.

Because they are so popular, knowing how to properly handle and sell apples will make your customers happy, help you reduce shrink and increase your department's profits.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Apples



Popular Varieties

Apples are grown throughout the United States and are typically harvested in Autumn. After harvesting, apples are stored in a controlled atmosphere for the balance of the year. The top apple producing states are Washington, New York, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Some of the most popular varieties are available almost year-round and include Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Fuji and Gala.

Red Delicious One of the top selling varieties of apples, it has a classic apple shape and color that is quickly recognized around the world. Its skin has a deep red color and it has an almost heart shape with five distinctive knobs at the bottom. It has a sweet, juicy, crisp flavor with firm texture, and is good for baking, eating raw as a snack and adding to salads. It is available throughout the United States all year-round.



Red Delicious

Granny Smith Another top seller, this versatile variety is one of the tartest. It has skin that is bright green and a firm flesh that holds its shape well when cooked, making it one of the most popular varieties used in recipes. It has a tart, juicy flavor and is good for cooking and baking, eating raw as a snack, adding to salads or for making caramel apples. It is available throughout the United States from September through June.



Granny Smith

Golden Delicious Also one of the top selling and varieties, this apple has a full, round shape. The Golden Delicious is mild and sweet and can vary from butter yellow to green with pale yellow flesh. It's considered an all-purpose apple but is excellent for cooking. It has a sweet, juicy, mellow flavor and is good for baking, adding to salads and sauces. It is available throughout the United States year-round.



Golden Delicious



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Apples

Popular Varieties (continued)



Fuji

Fuji A juicy, crisp, sweet apple with an orange red blush over greenish-yellow skin and a full round shape. It has a sweet flavor right off the tree and grows sweeter and richer in storage. It has a crisp, sweetly tart, big flavor and is good for eating raw as a snack, adding to salads or making into applesauce. It is available throughout the United States year-round.



Gala

Gala This is a very popular, medium-sized, conical-round apple. Gala is often used as a dessert apple. The skin is bright scarlet striped over yellow and thinner than that of most apples. It has a crisp, juicy, sweet flavor with a slight tartness and is good for eating raw as a snack, adding to salads, pairing with soft mild cheeses, baking and cider blends. It is available throughout the United States year-round.

Other Varieties There are many varieties of apples that are very popular, but have a limited availability throughout the year. These include the Braeburn, Cameo, Honeycrisp and Jonagold varieties. Keep an eye out for these varieties when they are in season.

NOTE

Avoid allowing apples to get wet as this can cause discoloration of the skin or if the apple has been waxed, water will cause an unappealing white film to appear on the skin. Apples should never be displayed near automatic misting systems for this reason.

Storage and Receiving Tips

- Apples must be kept cool, so it is important to move them immediately from the refrigerated truck to refrigerated storage or shelves. The optimum temperature they should be stored at is 30 - 40°F (-1.1 - 4.4°C) with high humidity (90 - 95%).
- Don't store apples below 29°F (-1.5°C) because this can cause chill damage which results in the core turning brown and the flesh breaking down.
- Store apples away from ripening rooms and avoid exposure to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene gas can cause the apple flesh to soften and lose crispness. Store apples away from any ethylene-producing items such as avocados, bananas, peaches, tomatoes, etc.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Apples



Handling

Here are some handling tips to consider:

- Handle apples carefully while stocking in the cooler, placing on work trucks and putting on display. Dropping apple cases or dumping apples from the box into a display area leads to bruising, which makes apples unappealing to your customers.
- Keep apples cold while on display. Apples ripen 6 - 10 times faster at room temperature than if they were refrigerated.
- Keep the surface of apples dry. Spraying apples with water before or during storage can lead to discoloration. Wax on apples may turn white if exposed to moisture.

Merchandising

Here are some merchandising tips to attract customers and increase your sales:

- Remember that the goal of any apple display is to drive consumption.
- Keep an apple display in the front of the department to show your customers a quality image.
- Keep all apples together and merchandise with color breaks using different apple varieties and complementary colors. Using complementary colors gives the display more visual appeal and creates a natural flow for the eye to follow.
- To keep variety and interest in the display, don't merchandise apples the same way every week.
- The size and space of the display should be in line with your apple category goals.
- If your department uses one, implement your apple *plan-o-gram*.
- Stock all varieties available. In larger stores this can mean using up to 12 varieties during the fall through the holidays. In smaller stores 7 - 8 varieties can work well.
- Use signage or special placement for new varieties when they are introduced.
- Include bagged apples with bulk apples to increase sales.
- Cross merchandise apples with other items to increase sales (caramel sauce for caramel apples, items for baking a pie, etc.).
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours so your displays always look fresh and plentiful.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Apples

Rotating

Below are some general rules for rotating apples:

- Rotate apples every time you replenish an apple display.
- When rotating apples, do not place bruised or dull apples on top of display. This will restrict sales.
- Take the oldest product from the cooler to the shelf before the next shipment arrives.
- Display the oldest product on top, keeping it most accessible.
- At least every two hours, make a quick pass through the apples. *Cull* out any problems to give your display maximum visual appeal.
- Take care. Be careful not to bruise the apples when stacking them on the display and when rotating them once they are stacked.

Here are some ideas for promoting seasonal high points to maximize sales volume:

- Fall Harvest Festivals
- Holidays: Christmas, New Year, Valentine's, Thanksgiving
- Special events: Back to School, Halloween, Super Bowl, Teacher's Day, Grand Openings
- Up-front lobby display, in-store specials

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Keep apples refrigerated because this will keep them fresh longer. However, apples can become soft when kept in a low-humidity refrigerator for too long. Leaving apples on counter tops or out in a fruit bowl for too long can cause the skin to become dull and the fruit to lose crispness.
- Don't store apples near ethylene-producing fruit such as avocados, bananas, peaches, pears, or tomatoes because the ethylene can cause the apples to soften and lose crispness.
- Don't store apples near strong foods such as onions, carrots, or celery because they can absorb strong odors.
- Wash apples just before you are ready to use them. Otherwise, keep the surface of the apples dry and away from moisture because it can lead to discoloration. Any wax on apples may turn white if exposed to moisture.
- If apples start to turn brown when cut, dip the cut apples in a mixture of lemon juice and water (1 part lemon juice to 3 parts water). This will slow the browning process. Browning is natural and occurs when the flesh of the fruit is exposed to oxygen (oxidation).

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Apples



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Apples

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build An Apple Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild an apple display. This means starting with an empty, clean display and building it according to your store's specifications using identified stacking techniques.

Sign-off: This task was completed, and the trainee's display has met the quality standards of our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Apples

The next time your store receives a shipment of apples be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes of apples are stored. Pay attention to the following issues:

- **Storage temperature:** Check to ensure the product is not being held at a temperature and humidity outside the high and low control points.
- **Product rotation:** Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that older product is clearly identified and stored in such a way that it will be rotated onto a display before any new product. Ensure that other ethylene producing products are kept away from apples in storage.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

on-the-job
training



NOTE

If you have a long display case designed to hold several varieties of apples, make sure you maximize color by placing green or yellow skinned varieties (Granny Smith, Golden Delicious) next to red or blush varieties (Red Delicious, Fuji, Gala, etc.). This is called using color breaks, and it increases the visual appeal of displays to your customers.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Avocados

Overview

The versatility of the avocado makes it one of the top-selling items in the produce department. In addition to making guacamole, they are a great addition to salads, omelets and sandwiches and they are increasingly popular for entertaining at sporting events, Cinco de Mayo, holiday parties, etc.



Availability All Year

The Hass variety of avocados are available year-round and the Florida variety is typically available from June to February.



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Avocados are sensitive to ethylene gas, which can hasten the ripening process and lead to over-ripe product.



Ethylene-producer Yes

Avocados produce ethylene gas while in storage, which can effect the ripening of other produce items that are ethylene sensitive.



Odor-sensitive No

Avocados are not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.



Odor-producer Yes

Avocados produce odors that could effect the quality of other produce items.



Misting No

Avocados should not be misted while stored or while being displayed.

Since you will find avocados on the shopping lists of more and more of your customers, understanding how to properly handle and display this product will help you make your customers happier and help to increase sales in your department.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Avocados



Popular Varieties

While there are more than 500 avocado varieties, the one you need to know really well is the Hass variety. The Florida variety of avocado is another you will find in your department on occasion.

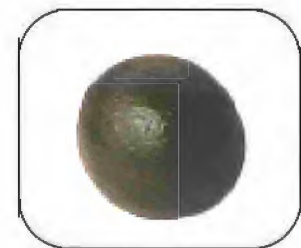
Hass This variety represents more than 90% of the avocados sold in the United States. Approximately 90% of avocados grown in the United States come from California. They are also produced in Chile, Mexico, New Zealand and the Dominican Republic. Hass avocados are available year-round, but their peak time is from February to September.

You can recognize a Hass avocado by its pear shape and greenish black, pebbly skin, which normally turns darker as it ripens. The flesh is yellow-green to pale green in color, smooth in texture and has a creamy yet rich, nutty flavor.

Florida Also known as the Fuerte, this avocado is grown domestically in the state of Florida. The Florida Avocado and is larger and rounder than the Hass variety. It has smooth, glossy green skin, with creamy, pale green flesh and a nutty flavor. It is available from June through February.



Hass



Florida

Receiving and Handling Tips

Here are some receiving and handling tips for avocados.

- Bring the avocados inside the store immediately upon arrival.
- Since avocados are one of the few produce items that will continue to ripen after they are picked, you may receive both ripe and unripe product. It's important to understand what to look for in each. Both the ripe and unripe avocados should be free of bruises and hard or soft spots, but the ripe avocados should yield to gentle pressure.
- Handle avocados very carefully to avoid bruising.
- Keep the surface of avocados dry. Misting avocados or getting them wet can lead to product softening and decay, shortening shelf life, increasing shrink and restricting sales.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Avocados

Storage

Here are some storage tips to consider:

- When storing boxes, place the boxes with the softer fruit on top and those with firmer fruit on the bottom.
- The optimum storage temperature for ripe avocados is 36 - 40°F (2.2 - 4.4°C).
- Do not store ripe avocados below 32°F (0.0°C) because that can lead to chill injury which will cause discoloration of skin or flesh.
- The optimum storage temperature for unripe avocados is 45 - 50°F (7.2 - 10°C). Do not refrigerate unripe avocados and don't store unripe avocados below 45°F (7.2°C) because that can lead to uneven ripening.
- Avocados like high humidity (85 - 90%).
- Exposure to ethylene gas may increase symptoms of chill damage, identified by a grayish-brown discoloration of skin or pulp or dark streaks through flesh. Store avocados away from ethylene-producing products such as apples, bananas, tomatoes or pears.
- Incorrectly stacking avocado boxes may cause uneven ripening because the air doesn't circulate properly. Stack avocado boxes on 40" x 48" pallets in an alternating four-block pattern to ensure proper air circulation and temperature control.

Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising tips.

- Check ripeness daily, displaying or using the ripest fruit first. Ripe and ready-to-eat avocados can outsell firm avocados by as much as 4 to 1, so display a greater percentage of ripe fruit to drive impulse sales. Ripe, ready-to-eat avocados will yield to gentle pressure when placed in the palm of your hand.
- Never dump avocados into a display, but instead hand stack them by arranging each item so that its best side is facing the customer. Dumping avocados from the box into a display will bruise and damage them.
- Avoid displaying avocados on refrigerated racks below 32°F (0.0°C) because this can cause chill injury which will cause discoloration of the skin or flesh.
- Never display avocados near misting systems. If avocados absorb water they will soften.
- Cross merchandise avocados with onions, limes and pre-cut salads to increase your department's incremental sales.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Avocados



Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- Consider bagged avocados as a secondary display to build awareness and generate sales.
- When possible use POS materials to build consumer awareness and generate sales.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.
- Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First Out) method of rotation.
- Rotate avocado displays daily and *cull* any bruised or overripe fruit.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- If consumers have avocados that are ripe and ready to eat but they are not ready to use them, the avocados can be refrigerated for 3 - 5 days to extend their shelf-life. They should not leave ripe avocados out on their counter or at room temperature for too long before they are ready to use them because this can lead to the fruit over-ripening.
- On the other hand, consumers should not refrigerate their unripe avocados or store them below 45°F (7.2°C) because that can lead to uneven ripening.
- Consumers should be careful about where they store their ripe avocados. Unintentionally exposing avocados to ethylene-producing fruit (apples, bananas, pears, tomatoes, etc.) will cause them to ripen quickly and may increase symptoms of chill damage.

Here are some simple steps that consumers can follow to prepare avocados at home:

- Carefully cut the ripe avocado length-wise around the seed.
- Twist the halves in opposite directions to separate.
- Remove the seed by sliding the tip of a spoon gently underneath and lifting out.
- Slip a spoon between the skin and fruit and scoop away from the peel.

To store cut avocados at home consumers should sprinkle the cut fruit with lemon juice, lime juice or white vinegar to prevent discoloration. Although the prepared fruit can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 1 - 2 days; for optimal freshness use immediately in salads, snacks and other recipes.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Avocados

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Avocados

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build An Avocado Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild an avocado display. This means starting with an empty, clean display and building it according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Focus carefully on placing the ripest stock on top, and that the most appealing side of the fruit is always facing the customer.

Optional Task: Work with your manager to cross merchandise avocados, by pairing them with other items needed to make guacamole (limes, onions, peppers, etc.).

Sign-off: This task was completed and the trainee's display has met the quality standards of our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Avocados

The next time your store receives a shipment of avocados be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes of avocados are stored. Pay attention to the following issues:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure the product is being held at a temperature within the high/low control points of 36 - 40°F (2.2 - 4.4°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First Out) rule to ensure that older product is clearly identified and is stored in such a way that it will be rotated onto a display before any new product. Ensure that other ethylene-producing products are kept away from avocados in storage.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Bananas



Overview

Bananas will always be one of the top-selling products in your produce department. Nutritionally, bananas are considered a virtually perfect food. They are very low in sodium, high in potassium and a significant source of vitamins A and C.

Availability All Year

Most varieties of bananas are available year-round. Some speciality varieties have a seasonal window.



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Bananas are sensitive to ethylene gas, which can hasten the ripening process and lead to an over-ripe products.



Ethylene-producer Yes

Bananas produce ethylene gas while in storage, which can effect the ripening of other produce items that are ethylene sensitive.



Odor-sensitive No

Bananas are not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.



Odor-producer No

Bananas do not produce odors and therefore do not impact the quality of other produce items.



Misting No

Bananas should not be misted while stored or while being displayed.



Since bananas are one of the top selling items in the produce department, keeping this item stocked and looking good means more happy customers, fewer complaints, reduced shrink and increased profit. The way you handle and merchandise bananas will make all the difference in how many you sell.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Bananas

Popular Varieties

While there are many varieties of bananas, the one you will encounter most often and year-round is the Cavendish. Specialty items may also exist in your store, and the rules for handling them will be quite similar.



Cavendish

Cavendish The most common variety of banana is the Cavendish. It has a yellow, relatively tough peel which protects the fruit.



Red

Red bananas are slightly smaller and plumper than the Cavendish variety. Red bananas are hardy and more resistant to handling. They have a sweet flavor and are available year-round.



Baby or Ladyfinger

Baby or Ladyfinger bananas are extremely delicate. For this reason they are typically placed in customer packs to avoid being damaged in handling.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Bananas



Receiving and Handling Tips

Here are some receiving and handling tips for bananas.

- Banana peels are sturdy, but the fruit inside is delicate and must be handled with care.
- Bring bananas in from the loading dock quickly. Leaving them out on the dock may put the bananas in the wrong temperature zone.
- You might receive bananas in one of a few different stages of product life – from green to greenish yellow to light, bright yellow. The brighter the yellow, the more ripe and ready your bananas are for putting out on display.
- Check fruit color when it arrives and use ripest bananas first. As mentioned earlier, the brighter the yellow, the more ripe the banana. Green bananas are the least ripe.
- Handle boxes carefully. Despite their thick skin, bananas bruise easily, and the bruises quickly turn a dark, unappealing brown, which makes the produce unappealing to your customers.
- Handle fruit by the crown only to prevent bruises.

Storage

Here are some storage tips to consider:

- Bananas of all kinds must be kept in designated storage areas or rooms with a temperature setting of between 55 - 59°F (12.8 - 15.0°C). Do not store mature green or ripe bananas below 55°F (12.8°C) because they can suffer chill injury which will cause dull skin color when the fruit ripens:
- If there is a need to ripen the bananas quickly, store them at 60 - 65°F (15.6 - 18.3°C). To slow ripening, remove lids from boxes, stack the boxes by staggering them and expose to air. This is called *air-stacking* or stagger-stacking. Don't air-stack boxes more than four high to prevent crushing.
- It is important to store bananas within the right temperature range. When kept too warm, they will over-ripen quickly and turn black. Temperatures lower than 55°F can turn bananas an unattractive grayish color and halt ripening and sugar development.
- Bananas will get mushy very quickly if they are exposed to water, so do not mist them.
- Bananas are ethylene-sensitive, so do not store them near ethylene-generating fruit such as apples and peaches. Keep them away from ripening rooms as well.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Bananas

Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising tips.

- Customers like to buy their bananas when they are somewhere within the range of green to yellow, so what goes into store displays should be within that range. Display fruit with the most yellow first since they are the most ripe.
- Bananas are edible once their color has become yellow with green tips and necks. Keep the display clean and fully stocked, *culling* throughout the day.
- Try to put them on the warmer side of the produce department, near the interface with the rest of the store, so that the air temperature is higher. Putting them near the salads and juices at 35 - 40°F (1.7 - 4.4°C) can cause them to turn grayish or blacken.
- To create an attractive and professional looking banana display, hand stack the bananas in single layer only with crowns up, labels forward and a good mix of green and yellow.
- If large quantities are set out, customers will handle them too much and they will get bruised and become unmarketable.
- Bananas are often an impulse buy so be sure displays are colorful, big and in visible, high-traffic areas of your department.
- A great way to drive banana sales is through the use of cross merchandising. You are cross merchandising whenever you point out an additional item that complements the item on display. Here are some examples of cross merchandising for bananas that have been proven to work:
 - Put an ice bin next to the display with fruit cups.
 - Feature boxes of chocolate dipping sauce for making easy, delicious chocolate-covered bananas.
 - Add interest to your display by cross merchandising them with specialty fruits such as persimmons or pomegranates or other tropical fruits.
- Some grocers have a second display located by the cereal aisle or sometimes at the checkout. These secondary locations help sell even more product as customers are more likely to buy them on impulse. Because secondary displays are away from the produce department it is easy to forget about them. These displays must be kept full at all times to have the maximum impact.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Bananas



Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- Here are some examples of secondary display locations for bananas that have been proven to drive impulse sales:
 - Create a small display near the cereal aisle or near the milk case.
 - Place single bananas near the checkout or near a deli sandwich counter for those who pack their lunch.
 - Try using bananas in displays featuring items such as vanilla pudding and vanilla wafers.
- Bananas need to be rotated often. Try to place small quantities on the shelves and replenish frequently. As you've heard before, if large quantities are set out, customers will handle them too much and they will get bruised and become unmarketable. See how these are only one layer and are a good mix of green and yellow? Leaving old fruit that is bruised and over-ripe on the shelf will leave a negative impression with your customers, so *cull* often before and after your busiest hours.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Do not store bananas in the refrigerator. They will turn a gray/brown color and even though they will still be edible, they will look undesirable.
- Unless a customer seeks fast ripening, they should avoid storing bananas in a fruit bowl with fruits like apples or peaches (or any produce item that emits ethylene gas), since this will cause bananas to ripen very quickly.
- Some customers will throw their bananas away when they get brown spots but they don't need to. Bananas are at peak flavor when small brown spots appear and are still good when covered by larger brown spots. That's because as bananas ripen, the starch in the fruit turns to sugar. The brown spots indicate that the sugar content is increasing. So, the riper the banana the sweeter it will taste.
- If the bananas do over-ripen, they are perfect for use in making banana nut bread, muffins, cakes and smoothies.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Bananas

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Bananas

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Banana Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild an banana display. This means starting with an empty, clean display and building it according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Focus carefully on ensuring that the fruit is facing crown-side up toward the customer, and that there is a mix of ripeness. Many customers like to buy some bananas that are ready to eat now, and some that are greener for later.

Optional Task: Work with your manager to cross merchandise bananas by pairing them with other items, or perhaps to build a special display of bananas in the cereal aisle.

Sign-off: This task was completed, and the trainee's display has met the quality standards of our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Bananas

The next time your store receives a shipment of bananas be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes of bananas are checked for quality, stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure the product is being held at a temperature within the high/low control points 55 - 59°F (12.8 - 15.0°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that older product is clearly identified and is stored in such a way that it will be rotated onto a display before any new product. Ensure that other ethylene-producing products are kept away from bananas.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Berries



Overview

Berries are another top seller in the produce department. Their sweet, juicy taste, wonderful aroma and versatility make them a consumer favorite. They are perfect as a snack; as an addition to cereal, salads and sauces, mixed into smoothies, pies and yogurt or as topping for cakes and desserts. Berries are fat-free and sodium-free and are also a good source of fiber and vitamin C. Berries are a relatively delicate fruit and require careful handling.

Availability Peak availability varies.

Blueberries: Year-round; Peak from June - October

Blueberries: Year-round; Peak from March - July

Blueberries: Year-round; Peak from May - October

Ethylene-sensitive No

Berries are not sensitive to ethylene gas.

Ethylene-producer No

Berries do not produce ethylene gas so they will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive No

Berries are not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

Odor-producer No

Berries do not produce odors and therefore do not quality of other produce items.

Misting No

Berries should not be misted while stored or while being displayed.

By understanding how to handle, merchandise and sell berries you will help your department increase profits, reduce shrink and make your customers return to buy more.

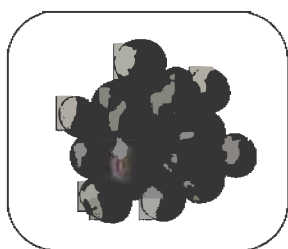




Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Berries

Popular Varieties

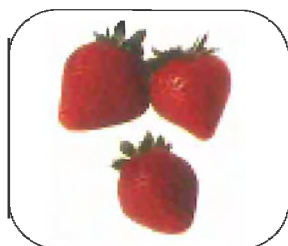
Berries come in many shapes, colors and taste varieties. The most popular berry varieties in the United States are blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and blackberries.



Blueberries

Blueberries are small and round with a flared crown. The skin should be firm, smooth and dark blue with firm, textured flesh. They have a sweet, slightly acidic taste when mature and are good for eating fresh or for use in baking, sauces, salads, shakes, smoothies, sorbets, jams, jellies or preserves.

Blueberries may have a hazy, white coating called *bloom* which is part of the blueberry's natural defense mechanism. Bloom is perfectly natural and is not an indication of ripeness or flavor, so there is no need to try to wash or wipe it off. Bloom is not mold and is not a sign of deterioration. Within the United States, blueberries are grown in California, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas and Washington State. While blueberries may be available most of the year, the primary shipping months are June through October.



Strawberries

Strawberries are small and oval to conical shaped, with a hull, or leafy green cap. The skin should be red and slightly bumpy with firm red, juicy flesh. They are the only fruit with seeds on the outside. They have a sweet, juicy taste when mature and are good for eating fresh as a snack and for use in baking, sauces, salads, shakes, smoothies, sorbets, jams, jellies or preserves.

Strawberries should be uniform in color and plump without dents or bruises, and should be dry, but with a nice sheen. The hull (leafy green caps), also called the *calyx*, should be bright green and not wilted. Strawberries are available year-round and most grown within the United States come from California, with the balance grown in Florida.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Berries



Raspberries are small ovoid or conical-shaped and composed of many connecting *drupelets* (tiny individual sections of fruit, each with its own seed) surrounding a central core. The skin should be red and glossy and the flesh should be firm, bright red and juicy. They have a sweet, juicy, slightly acidic flavor when mature and are good for eating fresh as a snack and for use in baking, sauces, salads, shakes, smoothies, sorbets, jams, jellies or preserves.

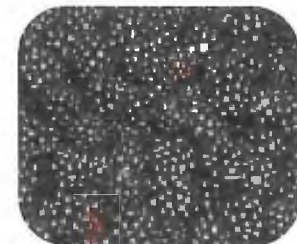
Raspberries should be uniform in color, round and full without dents or bruises and should be dry, but with a nice sheen. Like blueberries, raspberries can be coated with *bloom*, which is not a mold but a natural defense mechanism. Raspberries are shipped mostly from May through October, but you may see them year-round. Raspberries are grown within the United States in California, Oregon and Washington State.



Raspberries

Blackberries are small, oval to round in shape and composed of many connecting *drupelets* much like raspberries, but larger. The skin should be dark purple/black, smooth and glossy and the flesh should be firm, purple/black and juicy. They have a very sweet, bold and rich flavor when mature and are good for eating fresh as a snack and for use in baking, sauces, salads and preserves.

Blackberries should be round and full without dents or bruises and should be dry, with a nice sheen. Blackberries are available in the United States from May through September in Oregon, Texas, Florida, California and Washington.



Blackberries

Receiving and Handling Tips

Here are some receiving and handling tips for berries.

- Berries will most often arrive in refrigerated trucks. Maintain that proper refrigeration from the receiving dock to the display area. Quickly move berries from the loading dock to the cold storage room.
- Leaving berries exposed to a temperature above 40°F (4.4°C) for extended periods of time will lead to rapid deterioration of product.
- Along with keeping them cool, be sure to keep berries dry at all times. Any moisture will cause loss of flavor, hasten breakdown, shorten shelf-life, increase shrink and reduce sales.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Berries

Storage

Here are some storage tips to consider:

- The optimal temperature for most berries is 31 - 32°F (-0.6 - 0.0°C), and they like high humidity (90 - 95%).

It's important to know the storage life of each variety:

- Blueberries: 10 - 18 days when properly refrigerated.
- Strawberries: 7 - 10 days when properly refrigerated. Once cut, strawberries should be held below 40°F (4.4°C).
- Raspberries: 3 - 6 days when properly refrigerated.
- Blackberries: 3 - 6 days when properly refrigerated.

Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising tips.

- Always keep berries refrigerated in areas that are away from moisture, such as misting devices, because it can cause internal breakdown and loss of flavor. Berries should be kept dry to help preserve the flavor and prevent internal breakdown.
- Look for brilliant, even-colored, and symmetrically shaped berries. Berries should be uniform in color, round, and full – without dents or bruises – and should be dry, but with a nice sheen. A wet or leaky berry is the first sign of deterioration.
- The *calyx*, or green leafy cap on top of strawberries, help keep them from decaying fast. The calyx should be fresh and not wilted.
- Make sure your berry displays are fully stocked at all times.
- Rotate berries as you restock throughout the day. Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful. This will help to increase your berry sales.
- Promote berries in high-traffic areas. Berries are an impulse item and most consumers make their decision to buy based on appearance and pricing. Berries are an even bigger impulse item during Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, July Fourth and Labor Day.
- Look for ways to cross merchandise berries. Ask yourself what else do customers typically buy with these berries this time of year, then include those items in your display, such as whipped cream and shortcake.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Berries



Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- Appeal to the widest range of consumers by merchandising a mixed assortment of berries and packages. By displaying different types of berries together, you can maximize sales of each type of berry your department offers.
- Remove, or *cull*, packages with leaky or moldy berries. One bad berry package will impact your entire display and, ultimately, your sales and store image.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Berries are often picked and packaged right in the field so it is very important to wash them before eating.
- Keep berries in the refrigerator at all times until you are ready to use them. Berries left out of refrigeration have a substantially shorter shelf life and will break down quickly.
- Never rinse your berries until just prior to use. Any moisture will hasten the breakdown of the berries. Gently rinse berries with cool water just before eating.
- Remove moldy berries from your package immediately as mold will quickly spread to the other berries.
- Never remove the *calyx*, also known as leafy green caps, from strawberries until you are ready to use them. Instead, remove it after rinsing strawberries to help preserve the strawberry flavor and prevent internal breakdown.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Berries

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Berries

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Display of Berries

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild a display(s) for all berries offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect each container to ensure quality and freshness. Make sure all signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Optional Task: Work with your manager to cross merchandise berries by pairing them with other items, such as items for shortcake.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished displays meet the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Berries

The next time your store receives a shipment of berries, be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases of berries are checked upon arrival for quality, and how they are stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all products are being held at a temperature within the high and low control points.
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that older product is clearly identified and is stored so it will be used to replenish a display before the newer products.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Broccoli



Overview

Broccoli originated in Italy and is a member of the cabbage family, closely related to cauliflower. Broccoli is high in fiber and vitamins A and K. It is also high in calcium and vitamin C, which significantly improves calcium's absorption. Broccoli is also low in calories with only 40 calories per cup. It grows best in cooler weather, and in the United States it is grown primarily in California, as well as Arizona and Maine.

Availability Year-round



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Broccoli is sensitive to ethylene gas. Avoid storing near ethylene-producing products such as apples, bananas and peaches.



Ethylene-producer No

Broccoli does not produce ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.



Odor-sensitive No

Broccoli is not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.



Odor-producer No

Broccoli is not an odor-producer and will not impact the quality of other produce items.



Misting Yes

Broccoli should be misted regularly while in storage or on display.



Whether eaten raw or purchased for cooking, broccoli is a steady seller. By understanding how to handle, merchandise and sell broccoli effectively you will increase your profits, reduce your shrink and make your customers happy shoppers.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Broccoli

Popular Varieties

In this section we are going to review the different forms broccoli will come in to your store: bulk bunch, bulk crowns or in ready-to-eat bags.



Bunch



Crowns



Ready-to-eat

Bunch broccoli includes the stem and tends to have a lower retail price point. It appeals to price conscious consumers or those who like to eat the stem in addition to the floret portion of the broccoli.

Crowns have most of the stem trimmed off and are mostly the floret portion of the broccoli. The crown cut appeals to those who like to choose which heads of broccoli they want, as they are sold individually versus bunched together.

Ready-to-eat broccoli comes in bags. The broccoli is pre-washed and cut into individual florets making it the most convenient, but also the most expensive option for the customer.

Storage and Handling

Here are some storage and handling tips for broccoli.

- Cold is gold with regard to broccoli. Broccoli has a very high respiration rate which causes it to heat up and break down or decay at higher temperatures. It should be stored as close to 32°F (0°C) as possible and no more than 40°F (4.4°C). Store product in the cooler immediately upon arrival.
- Handle ready-to-eat packaged broccoli the same as you do bulk broccoli; check and record package dates immediately upon arrival and remove and record any product that is past the *BIUB* (Best If Used By) date.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Broccoli



Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising tips.

- Only display broccoli that is firm and contains deep green flowers.
- Be sure to merchandise broccoli with the crown (the green florets) facing up.
- For bunch broccoli the stem should be a waxy green. Any leaves present on the stem should be green, not yellow/white or wilted. The stalk should not be rubbery, but firm and crisp.
- For both broccoli bunch and crowns, the florets and beads should be tight and deeply colored. They are usually green, but occasionally the beads can look almost purple. The florets should be dense.
- Ready-to-eat bags can be merchandised with other ready-to-eat items or with bulk broccoli.
- Inspect, rotate and *cull* continuously, removing any product that wilts or shows whitening or yellowing of the leaves. The warmer the display, the more one should pay attention to signs of decay and the more culling one will need to do.
- Bags will have a *BIUB* (Best If Used By) date on them and should be organized with the closest BIUB date in the front, and the latest sell-by date in the back.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- The most common consumer mistake is improper refrigeration. Broccoli can become rubbery if stored in an area of the refrigerator that is too dry.
- Another common mistake is overcooking which will make the broccoli soft and mushy. Broccoli should be hot, but slightly crisp when cooked properly.
- Store broccoli in an open plastic bag in the crisper of the refrigerator (a cool, moist environment) where it will keep for a week.
- Since contact with water will speed deterioration, broccoli should not be washed until just before cooking or consumption. If it is washed before storing, care should be taken to remove excess moisture as it can cause mold to develop.
- If eating raw, wash thoroughly. If cooking, make sure to trim off any woody pieces, but leave the leaves, as they are rich in nutrients.
- Boiling broccoli removes the nutrients. Instead, steam or microwave broccoli with a minimal amount of water. If steaming, 10 - 12 minutes is adequate to thoroughly cook the broccoli without overcooking it.



NOTE

For bagged broccoli, make sure that all products you display are rotated according to the stamped *BIUB* date – older dates in front of the newer dates.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Broccoli

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Broccoli

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Broccoli Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild all displays of broccoli offered in your store (bunch, crown and bagged). This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect each head, crown or container of broccoli to ensure quality and freshness. Make sure all signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Broccoli

The next time your store receives a shipment of broccoli be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases of broccoli are checked upon arrival for quality, and how they are stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all products are being held at a temperature above 32°F (0°C) without exceeding 40°F (4.4°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases and containers of products on the storage shelves are clearly dated/labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Carrots



Overview

The versatility and sweet flavor of carrots make them popular with people of all ages and they are a staple in many different types of cuisines. They can be eaten raw or cooked making them a great item year-round. Carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A. In addition, they are a very good source of vitamin C, vitamin K, dietary fiber, beta carotene and potassium.

Availability Year-round



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Carrots are sensitive to ethylene gas. When exposed to ethylene-producing products (apples, bananas and peaches) the quality and flavor of carrots can be impacted.



Ethylene-producer No

Carrots do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.



Odor-sensitive Yes

Carrots are sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.



Odor-producer Yes

Carrots are an odor-producer and can impact the quality of produce items that are odor-sensitive.



Misting Yes

Carrots should be misted regularly while in storage or on display.



By learning how to handle, merchandise and sell more carrots you can decrease shrink, increase profits and create happy, loyal customers.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Carrots



Maroon



Bunched



Individual



Bagged

Popular Varieties

The carrot category has grown significantly in recent years. Your department may feature large individual carrots, bags of small ready-to-eat carrots, or bunched carrots with the green tops still attached. You may also see different colors of carrots, including light golden and maroon varieties.

Receiving and Handling

Here are some receiving and handling tips for carrots.

- Inspect carrots carefully upon arrival. Carrot roots should be firm, smooth, relatively straight and bright in color. If the tops are attached, the leaves should be bright green and fresh looking.
- Store in the cooler upon arrival. Carrots are hardy vegetables that will keep longer than many others if stored properly.
- Minimize the amount of moisture the carrots lose. To do this, make sure to store them in the coolest part of the walk-in at 32 - 36°F (0 - 2.2°C). Carrots will wilt if they are stored in low humidity. Carrots may begin to decay or sprout if stored at high temperatures.
- Carrots are ethylene-sensitive and should be stored away from apples, pears, potatoes, and other fruits and vegetables that produce ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene gas will cause them to become bitter.
- Handle pre-cut or pre-packaged varieties of carrots the same way as bagged carrots.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Carrots



Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising tips.

- When putting carrots on display, look for carrots that have a firm, smooth exterior and a crunchy texture. Avoid carrots that are rubbery or soft, have wilted tops or show any decay, mildew or splits.
- Merchandise all carrots together for maximum sales. Always display on refrigerated racks and keep sufficiently moist to prevent wilting. If displaying bunched carrots, be sure that the air can circulate around the tops.
- Bulk carrots should be misted regularly, so merchandise near other salad vegetables which also need to be misted, such as greens.
- Consider merchandising with dips or other cooking vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, potatoes or summer and winter squash.
- Carrots are a favorite add-in to salads, so ready-to-eat carrots should be merchandised with packaged salads to encourage impulse sales.
- Carrots are ethylene-sensitive and can absorb odors from apples and pears, so do not merchandise near them.
- Carrots are available year-round and can be featured for cooking in the colder months and consumed raw in the warmer months.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.
- *Cull* daily to remove any rubbery or limp product. Check bunch carrots frequently to ensure the tops are fresh and deep green. The typical shelf life of carrots is 28 - 180 days.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- The most common consumer mistake is improper refrigeration. Carrots can become rubbery if stored in an area of the refrigerator that is too dry.
- Carrots are great healthy snacks when combined with a dipping sauce or nut butter.
- Carrots can be added to soups or salads to add a sweet taste or crunchy texture.
- Carrots should be rinsed before eating or using in cooked foods.
- Dill, coriander, chervil and tarragon are herbs that enhance the flavor of carrots.



NOTE

For bagged carrots, make sure that all products you display are rotated according to the stamped *BIUB* date – older dates in front of the newer dates.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Carrots

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Carrots

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Carrots Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild all displays of carrots offered in your store (bunched, bulk and bagged). This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect each batch, bag and bunch of carrots to ensure quality and freshness. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Carrots

The next time your store receives a shipment of carrots be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases of carrots are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all products are being held at a temperature within the high and low control points of 32 - 36°F (0 - 2.2°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases and containers of products on the storage shelves are clearly dated/labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Celery



Overview

Celery is essential to cooking in most cuisines and is also delicious when eaten raw. It is considered to be one of the Big 4 Staples by chefs – along with onions, carrots and parsley – for making stocks or sauces.

Availability Year-round

A cool season product available year-round. Main growing regions include Arizona, California, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, Florida, Canada and Mexico.

Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Celery is sensitive to ethylene gas. When exposed to ethylene producing products (apples, bananas and peaches) the quality and flavor of celery can be impacted.

Ethylene-producer No

Celery does not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive Yes

Celery is sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

Odor-producer Yes

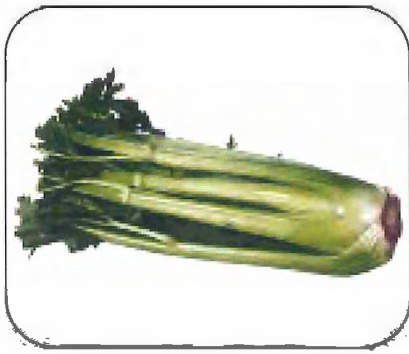
Celery is an odor-producer and can impact the quality of other produce items that are odor-sensitive.

Misting Yes

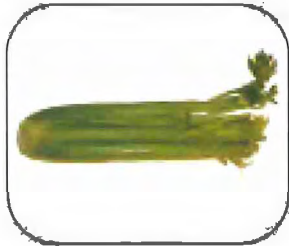
Celery should be misted regularly while in storage or while on display.

Because of how universal celery is for cuisine and vegetable trays it is important to understanding how to handle and merchandise this product correctly. This will help your department reduce shrink and keep customers happy.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Celery



Pascal



Celery Hearts

Popular Varieties

Celery is sold either as whole stalks or just the hearts. If it is whole stock celery it can either be naked (unpackaged) or sleeved, which comes in a partial plastic bag around the root-end. Celery in heart form is shorter and is almost always sold in a closed poly bag. Celery hearts are more tender and can be slightly sweeter than the outer stalk so they appeal to consumers looking for slightly sweeter, or less product.

There are a number of varieties of celery grown throughout the year, but most show characteristics that are indistinguishable to most consumers. The most common variety of celery is Pascal celery. It is known for its tall, pale-green stalks with leaves. Celery is fat-free, cholesterol-free, low in calories and sodium and is a good source for both vitamins A and C.

Storage and Handling

Here are some storage and handling tips for celery.

- Celery should be held at the ideal temperature range of 34 - 38°F (1.1 - 3.3°C), but no higher than 40°F (4.4°C), with high humidity (90 - 95%). Improper temperature or humidity will cause the celery to become flaccid or rubbery and will decrease its shelf-life.
- Covering the product with ice or misting can be helpful in maintaining the life of the product.
- Be sure to follow the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) practice. Carefully check packages and follow *BIUB* (Best If Used By) dates. Use those dates as your guide.
- Inspect celery regularly for slime or breakdown. Never leave marginal product on display.
- Inspect packaging. All packaging should be intact without tears or openings and should always be kept cold. If the package is bulging or swelling, remove it from display and discard immediately, regardless of the *BIUB* (Best If Used By) date.

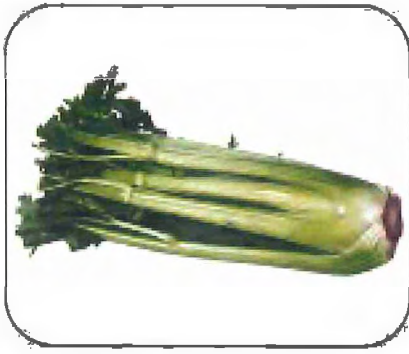
Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Celery



Merchandising

Here are some merchandising tips.

- Make sure to only display fresh celery. To determine celery's freshness, check the following:
 - Celery should be green and crisp when you cut into the stalk.
 - The cut ends should be clean and show minimal discoloration (white on the tops and bottoms, not light brown to black).
 - The aroma of the celery should be fresh and slightly sweet. A slightly bitter to bitter aroma is a sign of old age and the onset of decay.
 - The stalks should be firm and rigid and should show no signs of wilting or being rubbery and the ribs should be solid, not soft or pithy.
 - Leaves should be green and bright with no sign of yellowing.
- Display on refrigerated racks if possible because celery will dehydrate if left out of refrigeration.
- Offer consumers the choice of two different sizes and hearts.
- Expand display size to give more customers the chance to see your celery and develop the impulse to buy some.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Celery

Rotating

Here are some important tips for rotating celery.

- Celery should be rotated frequently, especially if displayed unrefrigerated.
- The amount of time that celery can be kept out of refrigeration may vary depending on if the product is sleeved, hearts or naked. Discuss with your produce manager how long celery can be kept out of refrigeration in your department.
- When rotating remove all product from the display, fill the display with new product and replace older product that is still fresh, blemish-free and of good green color with fresh leaves on the top of the display.
- When rotating, do not put lesser quality product back onto the display.
- Make sure to *cull* any product that wilts or shows yellowing of the leaves and trim or remove product with dark, discolored butts. The warmer the display the more you should pay attention to these signs.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Celery should be stored in the crisper of the refrigerator (a cool, moist environment) in a plastic bag. In these conditions celery can be kept for up to two weeks.
- Do not wash celery until you are ready to use it. If it is washed before storing make sure to remove excess moisture as it can cause mold to develop.
- If eating raw, wash thoroughly before eating. If cooking make sure to trim off any yellowed leaves, or dry, pithy and discolored pieces.
- If celery becomes wilted you can re-hydrate it by putting stalks or sticks in very cold water.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Celery



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Celery

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Celery Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild all displays of celery offered in your store (individual and bagged celery hearts). This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect each stalk and bag of celery to ensure quality and freshness. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Celery

The next time your store receives a shipment of celery be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases of celery are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all celery is being stored at a temperature within the control points of 34 - 38°F (1.1 - 3.3°C) and no higher than 40°F (4.4°C) with high humidity (90 - 95%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____



NOTE

For bagged celery, make sure that all products you display are rotated according to the stamped *BIUB* date - older dates in front of the newer dates.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cherries

Overview

In the months when you have cherries in your department, you'll see why they remain in the Top 20 best selling produce items. Customers love them and they are one of the top impulse sales items in the produce department.



Availability Summer Season

Cherries come from two major growing regions in the United States: California and the northwest. California cherries are available from late April until early June. Northwest cherries are available from early June until mid-August.



Ethylene-sensitive No

Cherries are not sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will not impact the shelf-life of cherries.



Ethylene-producer Yes

Cherries produce ethylene gas so they can speed up the ripening of other produce items.



Odor-sensitive Yes

Cherries are sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.



Odor-producer No

Cherries are not an odor-producer. They will not impact the quality of other produce items that are odor-sensitive.



Misting No

Cherries should not be misted while in storage or on display.

By understanding when cherries are available, how to handle them, merchandise, and sell them, you will be able to increase your department's profits, reduce shrink and keep your customers happy.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cherries



Popular Varieties

Cherries do not continue to ripen after they are picked. The best cherries are firm, smooth and consistent in color with green stems. Cherries are at their peak when they are shiny, plump and firm.

Dark or Sweet These make up nearly 90% of all fresh cherries and are easily distinguishable by their dark red to burgundy skin, green stems and red flesh. The most popular is the Bing cherry, but there are numerous other dark or sweet cherry varieties. All of these varieties should have a sweet flavor, smooth skin and green stems.



Dark or Sweet

Rainier These make up the other major cherry variety. Rainier cherries have a yellow background with a red blush and are noted for their especially high sugar content. Rainier cherries are very delicate and need to be handled gently.



Rainier



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cherries

Storage and Rotation

Here are some storage and rotation tips for cherries.

- Cherries should be stored at 35°F (1.7°C).
- Keep cherries in the cooler until they are ready to be displayed. When possible or practical use refrigerated shelves. Do not keep cherries on unrefrigerated shelves overnight in stores that aren't open 24 hours. For the best shelf-life return cherries to your cold room each evening.
- Cherries need to be able to breathe. Do not enclose cherries in a poly bag, as this will cause condensation to build up which dramatically shortens their shelf-life. Properly rotating cherries will help you have a successful cherry season.
- *Cull* any cherries that are soft, shriveled or have brown spots on them.

Merchandising

Because cherries are a high profit item, it is key to merchandize them properly when they are in season.

- Cherries are available for a limited time each year, and it is important to celebrate their seasonality. Help drive sales by announcing that cherries are here at each point of sale terminal.
- Cherries are an impulse item. You don't want any shopper to miss them when they are in season so make sure you allow plenty of space for your cherry display.
- Secondary cherry displays drive additional sales. Try a secondary cherry display at the opposite end of your produce department or even near the check-out stands.
- Offer recipes and nutritional information.
- If possible use additional signage so consumers can understand the effort and care it takes to get cherries to the produce department and why they often demand a premium price.
- Tout the health benefits of cherries. They are fat-free, sodium-free, cholesterol-free and a good source of fiber. They are also high in antioxidants which may help in cancer prevention. Clearly distinguish between the signage and displays for dark/sweet cherries and Rainier cherries.
- To prevent bruising, don't stack cherries too high and consider using false (dummy) bottom boxes. When using this technique, it is critical to keep displays replenished and full throughout your shift.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cherries



Merchandising (continued)

- Do not mist cherries because if they absorb excess water they will soften.
- Do not place cherries next to strong smelling items because the cherries will pick up those scents.
- When you have large displays on non-refrigerated tables, carefully watch your cherries for signs that they need to be moved back to refrigeration. Build displays that maintain steady momentum to keep cherries moving. If possible return your cherries to cold storage in the evening after the store has closed.
- Don't display cherries beneath fans or in direct sunlight. This causes cherry stems to dry out quicker, and firm cherries will go soft in direct heat.
- Not placing cherries out for customers to sample is one of the most common mistakes in stores. Cherries are a great tasting item and deserve a premium display.

Customer Tips

Educating the consumer about cherries truly pays off.

- Keep cherries cold until they are ready for consumption.
- Do not store cherries in the sun or warm areas since it will cause them to deteriorate quickly.
- Do not store cherries in the fruit/veggie crisper with strong smelling items. This will cause cherries to pick up those scents and alter their taste.
- Keep a bowl of cherries out for snacking especially when entertaining but return any leftovers to the refrigerator.
- Consider fresh cherries for sauces, glazes and more. There are many recipes available that feature cherries not only as a dessert item but also with poultry, pork, fish and beef as a main course item.
- Freeze cherries to extend the season. When tightly sealed, frozen cherries can be kept for up to a year.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cherries

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Cherries

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Cherry Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild main and secondary displays of cherries offered in your store for all types (Bing, Rainier or specialty varieties). This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications. Consider the use of dummy displays to avoid crush damage or other stacking/displaying technique identified by your manager. Carefully inspect each bag or batch of cherries to ensure quality and freshness. Lastly, make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Cherries

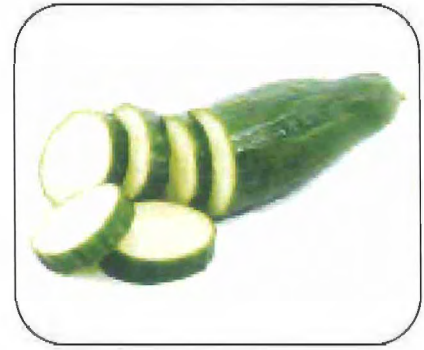
The next time your store receives a shipment of cherries be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the cases/bags of cherries are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all products are being held as close as possible to the control point of 35°F (1.7°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases/bags of product on the storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cucumbers



Overview

Cucumbers are one of the top selling produce items because of their refreshing, slightly sweet taste and versatility. They are a good addition to salads and can be pickled, juiced, braised or steamed as a side dish vegetable.

Availability Year-round (peak season is April - October)
Cucumbers are grown in many areas within the United States, including Florida, California and Georgia.

Ethylene-sensitive Yes
Cucumbers are sensitive to ethylene gas. When exposed to ethylene-producing products (apples, bananas and peaches) the quality and flavor of cucumbers can be impacted.

Ethylene-producer No
Cucumbers do not produce ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

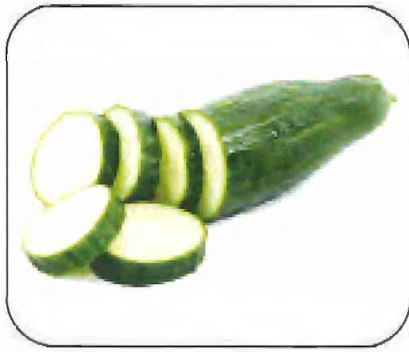
Odor-sensitive No
Cucumbers are not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

Odor-producer No
Cucumbers are not and odor-producer. They will not impact the quality of odor-sensitive produce items.

Misting No
Cucumbers should not be misted while in storage or on display.

Cucumbers are a high-profit staple item in the produce department and the way you handle and merchandise them will make all the difference in how many you sell. Keeping them stocked and at their peak means happier customers, fewer complaints, reduced shrink and increased profits.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cucumbers

Popular Varieties

Cucumbers are low-calorie, fat-free, sodium-free and cholesterol-free, in addition to being a good source of vitamin C. The most popular cucumber varieties are Green (also called Slicing), English and Kirby. A more rare variety is the round lemon cucumber, which is a sweet variety, typically used for pickling.



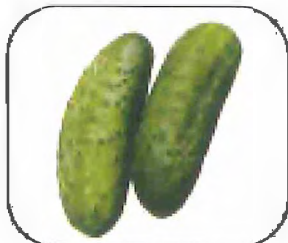
Green or Slicing

Green or Slicing Also called garden cucumbers, this is the most popular variety sold on the market. They are an even dark green in color and have a straight, plump shape with slightly tapered ends and smooth skin. They are typically waxed to hold in moisture and to improve shelf-life.



English (Hothouse)

English Also referred to as hothouse cucumbers, this variety is elongated and virtually seedless. They are crisp, thin-skinned and are milder in flavor than standard green cucumbers. They require no prepping or peeling and are excellent for salads and sandwiches. They are individually sealed in plastic to improve shelf life and protect them from handling and storage damage.



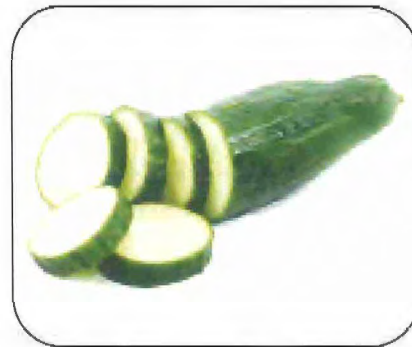
Kirby (Pickling)

Kirby This variety is small in comparison to the traditional slicing or greenhouse cucumbers. Kirby and Lemon cucumbers are most often used for pickling, although they are also eaten fresh. They are slightly oval and thick in the middle, with a thin, prickly skin that is dark green with some yellow. The taste is fresh and juicy, but less bitter than traditional slicing or greenhouse cucumbers.



Lemon (Pickling)

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cucumbers



Receiving and Handling

Here are some receiving and handling tips for cucumbers.

- Check and record carton dates immediately upon arrival. Remove and record any product that is past the *BIUB* (Best If Used By) date.
- Be sure to inspect cucumbers carefully upon arrival and remove any cucumbers with soft, sunken ends because this is an indication of over-mature product.
- Discard damaged or decayed product from cartons as they can negatively affect the quality of the rest of the cucumbers within the carton during storage.
- Do not drop shipping containers on the floor because rough handling of cucumbers can promote bruising.

Storage

Here are some storage tips for cucumbers.

- Upon arrival, cucumbers should be stored at a temperature range of 45 - 50°F (7.2 - 10°C). For best quality maintain a relatively high humidity level – the optimum level is 85 - 95%. Storing cucumbers in an area with low humidity will result in unwanted shriveling.
- Although cucumbers should remain in the cold box, they are highly sensitive to freezing and chilling injury. To prevent chill injury do not store cucumbers below 45°F (7.2°C). If they do experience chill injury, cucumbers will likely decay rapidly after they are brought out of storage. Indications of chill injury are water soaked spots or pitting.
- Don't store cucumbers above 50°F (10°C) because that could promote yellowing and softening.
- Good quality cucumbers should be firm, well shaped and have an even, dark green color and uniform size.
- Although they do not produce ethylene gas, cucumbers are sensitive to the effects of ethylene so do not store them near any items that produce ethylene, such as apples, avocados, bananas, peaches or tomatoes. Exposure to ethylene-producing items may cause the cucumbers to turn yellow and soften.
- The typical storage life in optimal conditions is 10 - 14 days.



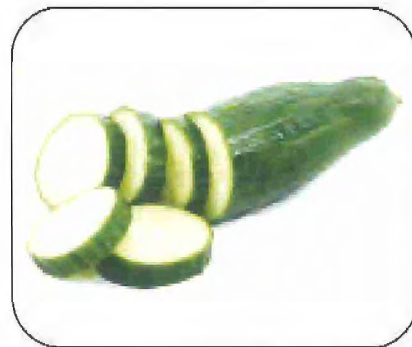
Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cucumbers

Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising and rotating tips for cucumbers.

- When putting cucumbers on display choose cucumbers that are firm but not hard.
- Cucumbers should be kept cold if possible but can be displayed on dry tables.
- To reduce cucumber cuts and bruising do not dump cucumbers from cartons/case boxes onto the display – they should always be hand stacked.
- Avoid merchandising cucumbers in direct sunlight since this will reduce shelf-life.
- One way to reduce the amount of handling is to merchandise in display-ready cartons when possible.
- Try displaying a variety of cucumbers together with point of sale information to educate the consumer on the differences between field, greenhouse, pickling and other specialty varieties.
- Display a mix of both bulk and packaged cucumbers for the same reason. This offers consumers a unique opportunity to purchase larger quantities of cucumbers versus buying individually.
- Display a mix of different price levels because this can also help differentiate cucumbers and help build category profitability.
- Cucumbers are a common salad ingredient so display them close to prepackaged salads, bell peppers and carrots. Use cucumbers to create a color break with these items on display. This will bring attention to the display and help remind consumers to purchase a key ingredient of the salads.
- Cross merchandise with other salad ingredients such as lettuce, spinach, radishes, celery, salad dressings and dipping sauces to increase impulse purchases. Kirby cucumbers (pickling cucumbers) can be cross merchandised with vinegar and pickling spices.
- Promoting the nutritional benefits of cucumbers to consumers is an excellent way to increase consumer consumption. When available, use point of purchase materials to promote nutritional benefits.
- When rotating cucumbers use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rotation method. *Cull* cucumbers on display often to keep the display looking fresh and vibrant. Cucumbers that are yellow, soft or decaying will not sell.
- Remember to restock just before and after the rush hours in your produce department so your displays always look fresh and plentiful. This will help to further increase your cucumber sales.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cucumbers



Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Wrap or store unwashed cucumbers in plastic and keep in crisper until ready for use.
- Any unused portion of a cut cucumber should be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerated.
- Never freeze cucumbers or keep them in the coldest areas of the fridge. They will soften and become mushy.
- Select firm, unblemished cucumbers that are rounded at the tips and heavy for their size.
- Reject any products with soft spots or withered ends.
- Green or slicing cucumbers are often waxed to seal in moisture; unwaxed cucumbers should be sealed by wrapping them tightly in plastic wrap.
- Waxed cucumbers should be thoroughly washed or peeled before serving.
- To prep and seed a green or slicing variety cucumber, peel, then cut in half lengthwise. Using a spoon, scrape out the seeds down the middle.
- English or hothouse cucumbers have a thinner skin, are not waxed and require little to no prepping, such as peeling or de-seeding.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Cucumbers



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Cucumbers

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Cucumber Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or re-build all displays of all cucumber types offered in your store (Green, English, pickling or specialty varieties). This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each cucumbers to ensure quality and freshness. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Optional Task: Build a cross merchandised display that includes other items used for salads, such as lettuces, carrots, radishes, peppers, etc.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Cucumbers

The next time your store receives a shipment of cucumbers be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes or cases of cucumbers are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are stacked and stored. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all cucumbers is being stored at a temperature within the control points of 34 - 38°F (1.1 - 3.3°C), and no higher than 40°F (4.4°C), with high humidity (90 - 95%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Grapes



Overview

Grapes are among the favorite fruits of all consumer groups and they are one of the top profit-producers in your department. They are sweet, easy to prepare and eat and they make perfect healthy snacks. Grapes have few calories and no sodium, cholesterol or fat. Grapes also offer significant health benefits. Some research suggests that nutrients in grapes help prevent diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

Availability Year-round (variety-specific season)

There are over 50 different varieties of grapes that are derived from all areas of the world. Some are available all year long, but many specialty grapes have a limited season.

Ethylene-sensitive Yes (moderate)

Grapes are sensitive to ethylene gas. When exposed to ethylene-producing products (apples, bananas, peaches) quality is impacted and may lead to an increase of *shatter* (grapes falling off the stem).

Ethylene-producer No

Grapes do not produce ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive Yes

Grapes are sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

Odor-producer Yes

Grapes are an odor-producer and can impact the quality of produce items that are odor-sensitive.

Misting No

Grapes should not be misted while in storage or on display.

Understanding how to handle, merchandise and inform your customers about grapes will help you increase profits, reduce shrink and create happy, loyal customers.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Grapes

Popular Varieties

There are more than 50 varieties of fresh grape. Here are the attributes of the six most popular for you to know:



Crimson

Crimson Seedless One of the top selling varieties of grapes, it is bluish-red in color and has a cylindrical shape. Crimson Seedless are a medium size grape that is only available from August to January. It is a seedless variety of grapes.



Flame

Flame Seedless Another top seller, it is dark red to maroon in color. Flame Seedless are a medium size grape, round in shape and seedless. They are available from May to December.



Perlette

Perlette grapes are light green and nearly round in shape. They are a seedless variety with a medium sized grape. Perlette grapes are available in the summer months (May to August).



Red Globe

Red Globe A popular variety, it has very large, red colored grapes. The shape of the grape is round and they do have seeds. They are available from July to January.



Ruby

Ruby Seedless are deep red in color with an oval shape. They are medium-sized and are seedless. Ruby Seedless are available from August to January.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Grapes



Popular Varieties (continued)

Thompson Seedless are the most popular variety of grape. They are light green in color and have a cylindrical shape. They are a medium to large sized grape and do not have seeds. Thompson Seedless grapes are available from June to January.

Receiving

Here are some receiving tips for grapes.

- Immediately after receiving a produce delivery grapes should be placed in recommended holding conditions as soon as possible. Grapes should be placed under refrigeration at 30 - 32°F (-1.1 - 0°C) with a high relative humidity (90 - 95%) to ensure best quality. Remember that the quality and shelf life of any produce item is directly dependent on your ability to maintain the correct temperature and relative humidity. The greater the amount of time out of ideal holding conditions, the shorter the shelf life of the product.
- The store's receiving dock should not expose grapes to warm air during transfer from the truck to the temperature-controlled storage room.



Thompson

Storage

When storing grapes in the cooler, keep the following tips in mind:

- Moving air has a drying effect on grapes so make sure that they are not stored in the cooling unit's direct air path.
- Table grapes are somewhat sensitive to ethylene but not as sensitive as many other fruits. However, exposure to ethylene may be a secondary factor in causing *shatter* or when grapes fall off the stem. You can tell when grapes have shattered by looking for loose grapes at the bottom of a bin. Reduce the effects of ethylene exposure by maintaining cold temperatures, good air movement and installing ethylene filters.
- Avoid storing grapes next to green onions and leeks because their odor tends to be absorbed by grapes.

When stacking grape boxes, keep the following in mind:

- Grapes are a delicate fruit so they should always be stacked on top of heavier boxes to prevent crushing.
- Stack grape boxes in the cooler so that air can circulate.
- Never stack grape boxes on the ground as any excess moisture or dirty surface can initiate the opportunity for mold to grow on the grapes.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Grapes

Storage (continued)

Finally, avoid water contact:

- Moisture will damage grapes and decrease shelf life so grapes should never come in contact with water or ice.
- Rinsing the grapes will shorten their shelf life and could remove the natural protective layer created by the grapes, called *bloom*. Once the bloom is removed, grapes are more susceptible to mold and decay.

Merchandising and Rotating

Grapes are among the highest generator of dollars per square foot in the produce department. Grapes help drive sales and volume and can be merchandised and promoted most of the year. Abundant, fresh, high-quality and well-maintained grape displays generate increased impulse grape sales. Here are some other tips for merchandising grapes:

- Use refrigerated displays to maximize shelf life.
- Mix grape colors, sizes and varieties to add a dramatic look and provide customers with convenience while selecting grapes.
- Build eye-catching spillover or waterfall displays to give grapes greater exposure.
- Create secondary displays to drive additional sales and highlight unique varieties.
- In any sampling program make sure that your samples are at a high *brix* level (*brix* is the sugar content of grapes). Grapes with lower *brix* levels have a starchy flavor and mouthfeel.

While building your display, remember the same tips hold true for customer displays as they do for storage:

- When building a display, protect their quality and prevent crushing by stacking grapes no more than two layers high.
- Avoid displaying grapes next to green onions and leeks because grapes can absorb their odor.
- Keep grapes away from water. Never wash grapes in preparation for the display. Also never place grapes out on the display in an area where they will come in contact with water.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Grapes



Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- Misting will harm grapes so make sure they are not misted or subject to automatic misting systems.
- When rotating grapes use the *FIFO* (First-in, First-out) rule – always move older product to the top and center of the display. Remove grapes from the display that no longer look fresh.
- *Cull* the product often and replace decaying or discolored product. This is essential for maintaining a display that will attract customers and encourage them to buy your grapes.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Grapes are harvested when fully ripe and do not continue to ripen after being picked. They are ready to eat the minute they are brought home.
- The sugar content of grapes and other fruits is called the *brix* level. The best way to tell that grapes have a high brix level is to taste them yourself and share that great news with your customers.
- Do not rinse grapes until just before eating.
- Select bunches of grapes with colorful, plump clusters that are attached to pliable, green stems.
- Grapes should be stored in the refrigerator, unwashed and away from onions or other strong-smelling foods.
- When stored properly they will remain fresh for up to one week.

Customers make these common mistakes:

- Rinsing grapes and storing for hours or days before use.
- Not refrigerating grapes.

NOTE

Ripe grapes are also the best time to use in sampling programs.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Grapes

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Grapes

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on this popular produce item.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Grapes Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the display of all grapes offered in your store, including specialty varieties. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each bunch of grapes to ensure that only the best quality are being sold. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Optional Task: Create a sampling display of a grape variety at their peak of flavor and sweetness, for example, a high *brix* content.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Grapes

The next time your store receives a shipment of grapes be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases of grapes are checked upon arrival for quality, and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all grapes are being stored at a temperature within the control point range of 30 - 32°F (-1.1 - 0°C) with a high relative humidity (90 - 95%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Lettuce/Bagged Salad



Overview

You will see a lot of different varieties of lettuce in the produce department. Lettuce is one of the top selling produce items and is a staple in many salads and sandwiches. It appeals to customers because it's fat-free, cholesterol-free, very low in both calories and sodium and it adds a great cool, crisp texture to foods. It is also a good source of vitamin A.

Availability Year-round (variety-specific season)

Domestically, lettuce is grown year-round in California and during specific months in other locations throughout the United States. Bagged salads are available year-round.

Ethylene-sensitive Some

Lettuce does not ripen after harvest, but the leaves are sensitive to ethylene gas which can cause *russetting* (brown spots).

Ethylene-producer No

Lettuce does not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive No

Lettuce is not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

Odor-producer Yes

Lettuce is not an odor-producer and will not impact the quality of produce items that are sensitive to odor.

Misting Yes

Lettuce should be gently misted while in storage or on display.

Understanding some basic information about lettuce and knowing how to properly store, handle and merchandise this popular product will help you please more of your customers, reduce shrink and increase profit in your department.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Lettuce/Bagged Salad

Popular Varieties

The most popular lettuce varieties to focus on are Green and Red Leaf Lettuce, Romaine, Iceberg and a mixture of the different varieties in Bagged Salads. Here are the primary features and uses of each:



Green Leaf

Green and Red Leaf These lettuces have elongated, v-shaped leaves joined loosely at the stem. The loosely bunched, curly leaves have a crisp texture and a somewhat buttery, fairly sweet taste. Green leaf lettuce is characterized by medium to dark green leaves with nearly white ribs or veins. Red leaf lettuce is characterized by green leaves with red-tinged edges. They are good for use in salads and on sandwiches.



Romaine

Romaine This head of lettuce is characterized by long, loaf-shaped, narrow leaves which are rounded at the top. The leaf colors range from dark green outer leaves to greenish-yellow inner leaves. The leaves are coarser and firmer than most other types of lettuce and have a very crisp texture with a sharp and somewhat nutty taste. Romaine lettuce is good for use in salads and on sandwiches.



Iceberg

Iceberg One of the most popular varieties, iceberg lettuce is characterized by round, compact heads of tightly packed leaves that are white to pale green and look similar to a head of cabbage. This lettuce has a very crispy texture and a very mild, delicate flavor. Iceberg lettuce is good for use in salads and on sandwiches.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Lettuce/Bagged Salad



Popular Varieties (continued)

Bagged Salad Green leaf, red leaf, romaine and iceberg are the primary ingredients in most salad blends other than spring mix, which continues to take up more and more shelf space. While spring mix is actually a blend of over six ingredients, there are up to twenty-one ingredients that can be blended into a spring mix. Some of those ingredients are baby versions of romaine, red romaine, green leaf, red leaf as well as other varieties such as arugula, frisée, radicchio, green oak, red oak, mache and others. Bagged salads are also frequently used in salads and sandwiches.



Bagged

Receiving and Handling

Here are some receiving and handling tips for lettuce.

- Check and record package dates immediately upon arrival. Remove and record any product that is past the *BIUB* (Best If Used By) date.
- Lettuce and bagged salads are items that must not break the cold chain, so it's important to move them immediately from the refrigerated truck to refrigerated storage.
- Handle all lettuce with care. Do not drop shipping containers on the floor because any type of rough handling can promote bruising or decay, both in bulk and bagged lettuce.
- Mist bulk lettuce to maintain freshness, but avoid excessive water sprinkling because it may promote breakdown of delicate leaves.
- Do not use box cutters to open boxes because you could accidentally cut into the lettuce packages or bags.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Lettuce/Bagged Salad

Storage

When storing lettuce in the cooler keep the following tips in mind:

- Lettuces do not ripen after being picked so they should be treated with great care.
- Lettuce should be stored at 32°F (0°C) at all times with high humidity (98 - 100%). Storing lettuce at higher temperatures or lower humidity may promote rapid decay and wilting. If the outer leaves of the lettuce become dried out, yellowed or translucent. This is an indication of freeze damage, which means that the lettuce was exposed to temperatures below 31°F (-0.5°C).
- While lettuce does not produce ethylene gas it is sensitive to the effects of it, so do not store lettuce or bagged salad items near ethylene-producing items such as apples, avocados, bananas, pears, tomatoes or ripening rooms. If lettuce is exposed to ethylene-producing items, it may exhibit brown spotting (also known as russetting).
- The typical storage life of lettuce is 14 - 21 days.

Merchandising and Rotating

Lettuces and bagged salads can be promoted year-round. Here are some tips for merchandising and rotating these item:

- Follow good rotation practices by using the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule, meaning the older products should be in the front of the display. The earliest *BIUB* (Best If Used By) dates should also be in the front of the display.
- Avoid overloading displays with product. The weight can crush delicate lettuce leaves and prevent air from circulating properly.
- You can't sell what isn't there, so continuously replenish your displays and bins with the best quality product. A display that has a picked over look is not appealing to your customers, which is why you will often see customers ignore displays with only a few heads or bags of lettuce left on it.
- When you are refreshing the display throughout the day remember to rotate new product to the back of older product and remove any product that is damaged or old. Watch the dates on the packaged salads and be sure to remove any product that is old and inferior from the display, called *culling*. Culling is extremely important, because it keeps the display looking fresh and clean. Make sure to cull any damaged lettuce leaves throughout the day.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Lettuce/Bagged Salad



Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- Remember to restock just before and after the rush hours in your produce department, so your displays always look fresh and plentiful. This will help to further increase your lettuce and packaged salad sales.
- Look for opportunities to cross merchandise – that is to provide complementary items with the lettuces and bagged salads displays. If your display will use different varieties of lettuces, ask yourself what else do customers typically buy with these lettuces? Then include those items in your display. For example, you could cross merchandise the lettuce with items needed to make a salad, such as carrots, celery, mushrooms or fresh herbs. You could also cross merchandise non-produce items with bagged salads such as croutons or salad dressings.
- Although your customers may not have planned to purchase all of the items being cross merchandised with lettuce, when they see them on your display they may decide to impulsively buy the other items in addition to the lettuce or bagged salads. Additionally, they will probably appreciate that they didn't have to search through the store for the different items because you will have everything right there, making it very convenient for them.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Immediately place all lettuce and bagged salads in the refrigerator when you get home.
- Wash lettuce thoroughly and let dry just before using.
- For bagged salads leave the lettuce in the package in which it came, but expel air and keep the bag closed after opening.
- Pay attention to the *BIUB* (Best If Used By) date.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Lettuce/Bagged Salad

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Lettuce/Salad

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Lettuce Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or re-build the displays of Iceberg, Romaine, Leaf and Bagged Salads offered in your store. This should include separate organic displays. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each head, leaf or bag of lettuce and ensure that only the best quality are being sold. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Lettuce

As your store receives shipments of lettuce be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality, and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage according to type. Pay attention to the following:

- **Storage temperature** Check to ensure all heads of lettuce are being stored at a temperature close to 32°F (0°C) at all times with high humidity (98 - 100%).
- **Product rotation** Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards. For bagged salad, make sure that the earliest *BIUB* (Best If Used By) are up front and ready to be used before later arrivals.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Melons



Overview

Increased availability in recent years has allowed melons to receive more popularity among consumers and has led to more profitability for the produce department. Melons are a great source of fiber, potassium, iron and vitamin C. Melons are low in sodium and cholesterol and are fat-free.

Availability Year-round (Summer peak)

Melons are available year-round with the greatest amount of variety available during the summer months, where as many as 20 varieties are in season.

Ethylene-sensitive Some

Some varieties like watermelon are ethylene-sensitive; others like cantaloupe and honeydew are not.

Ethylene-producer Yes

Melons release ethylene gas and can impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive No

Melons are not sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

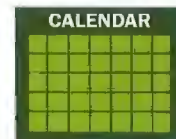
Odor-producer No

Melons are not odor-producers and they will not impact the quality of produce items that are sensitive to odor.

Misting No

Melons should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Understanding when melons are available, the differences between varieties and how to handle, merchandise and sell them you will be able to increase your department's profits, reduce shrink and keep your customers loyal and happy.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Melons

Popular Varieties

In the United States, melons are primarily grown in California, Florida, Arizona, Texas and other warm states that experience long summers. Melons may also be imported from other countries where the climate is warm and there are long growing seasons. While there are many varieties of melons, the most common are cantaloupe, honeydew and watermelon.



Cantaloupe

Cantaloupe This variety belongs to the same family as the cucumber and squash and like many of its relatives and grows on the ground on a trailing vine. Cantaloupes are also referred to as netted melons because they have a ribless rind with a distinctive netted skin. Inside the melon is a hollow cavity that contains seeds encased in a web of netting. Cantaloupe is the most popular melon in the United States and is available year-round.



Honeydew

Honeydew This variety is round to slightly oval, about eight inches long and extremely smooth with no netting or ribs. Some soft hairs are present on the surface in early stages. The rind color is greenish white when immature, becoming somewhat creamy yellow when ripe. The flesh is light green, thick, juicy, sweet and uniquely flavored.



Watermelon

Watermelon This variety is large and round or elongated like a football. There are also new varieties of watermelons which are small and are perfect for consumers with limited refrigeration space or small families. This sweet, crisp fruit is actually a member of the cucumber family. The flesh holds a lot of sweet juice and is about 88% water. Flesh of the melon can be red or yellow and they come in seeded or seedless varieties. The red variety is generally the sweetest; the general rule is that the darker the flesh, the sweeter the taste.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Melons



Handling and Storage

Here are some handling and storage tips for melons.

- Although melons are relatively durable and hardy, they can still be bruised, so handle melons with the same care as given to other produce.
- Store whole cantaloupes at 36 - 41°F (2.2 - 5°C), honeydews at 41 - 50°F (5 - 10°C), and watermelons at 50 - 59°F (10°C - 15°C) with high humidity (90%). Store all fresh cut melons at 36 - 38°F (2.2 - 3.3°C).
- Melons produce ethylene. Some melons, such as watermelons, are ethylene-sensitive while others like cantaloupes and honeydews are not.
- For optimum sweetness, juiciness and texture, melons need to be used within one week.
- Do not mist melons. Misting melons promotes deterioration and will decrease shelf life.
- Ice can damage honeydews and watermelons. Ice may cause pitting of the rind or a loss of color. Cantaloupes, however, may be placed in ice.
- If cutting melons in store, wash the outside of the melon with warm water and soap before cutting. Then place cut melons immediately into the cooler in a tightly closed plastic bag or container.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Melons

Merchandising and Rotation

When putting melons on a display look for:

- Firmness with no soft or moldy areas.
- Ripeness (a good test for ripeness is a good, melon-like fragrance).
- Fruit heavy for its size; this indicates melon's flesh has ripened and is turning into sugar, which promotes more water weight.
- The rind should yield slightly under pressure. This indicates the fruit's flesh is ripening and breaking down starch into sugar. When the flesh is ripe, it is sweeter and has a higher sugar content.

Merchandising techniques to consider:

- Group varieties to create displays that appeal to a wide range of customers.
- Display melons near items that complement the melons in taste and color such as grapes, berries or citrus. This way you can help your customer see how beautiful their salad with watermelon can be.
- Offer melons whole or cut to increase sales. Different options will appeal to different consumers' preferences. Some consumers will find it easier to store and appreciate the convenience of store-cut melons while other customers prefer whole melons.
- Melons are an impulse buy (often times during the summer months) so feature them prominently in store promotions, including signage, and try displays in high traffic areas.

Rotation tips for melons:

- Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) technique. Merchandise the oldest product from the cooler to the shelf before the next shipment arrives.
- Always display the ripest product on top or closest to the customer, keeping them most accessible.
- Inspect displayed melons regularly, *culling* out any problems so that the displays have maximum shelf appeal.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Melons



Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Since most melons are sold slightly under-ripe, they need to be purchased a few days before they are to be eaten so they can develop maximum flavor.
- To speed up the ripening of a melon, place it whole in a closed paper bag. The ethylene gas the melons produce will help them ripen.
- Melons are usually served slightly chilled with just a squeeze of lemon or lime juice. They can also be eaten plain, used in salads, and make terrific, healthy desserts.

The most common mistakes with melons are:

- Not washing melons with warm water and soap before cutting and eating.
- Leaving cut melons out of the refrigerator for too long. Melons, like most cut fruit, will breed bacteria quickly when left at room temperature.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Melons

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Melons

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Melon Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of watermelon, cantaloupes and honeydews offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each melon and ensure that only the best quality are being sold. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Optional Task: Create a display that contains an array of specialty melons or fresh cut melons.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Melon

As your store receives shipments of melons be involved to help in the receiving process paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all melons are being held at the following control points: whole cantaloupes at 36 - 41°F (2.2 - 5°C), honeydews at 41 - 50°F (5 - 10°C) and watermelons at 50 - 59°F (10 - 15°C) with high humidity (90%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Mushrooms



Overview

Mushrooms owe a large part of their increasing popularity to their versatility. They are easy to prepare and add flavor to many savory dishes, such as stir-fries, soups, sauces and stews. In addition to their versatility, mushrooms are fat-free, saturated fat-free and cholesterol-free. They are also very low in sodium, high in riboflavin and are a significant source of niacin and copper.

Availability Year-round

Mushrooms are grown year-round in a few locations in the United States, including the states of California, Florida, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Ethylene-sensitive No

Mushrooms are not sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will not impact the shelf-life of mushrooms.

Ethylene-producer No

Mushrooms do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive Yes

Mushrooms are sensitive to odors from other products, like onions.

Odor-producer No

Mushrooms are not an odor-producers and they will not impact the quality of produce items that are sensitive to odor.

Misting No

Mushrooms should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Since mushrooms are one of the top selling items in the produce department and are available each and every day, understanding how to properly store, handle and merchandise them will result in reduced shrink, increased profits and more satisfied customers in your department.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Mushrooms

Popular Varieties

Generally, the most popular mushroom varieties are Button or white, Portabella, Crimini and Shiitake.



Button or White

Button or White The most common mushroom sold, this variety has round, white caps that fit closely to the stem and a delicate flavor. They come in a variety of sizes from tiny button to medium and large sizes. They can be used raw in salads or with dips, broiled and stuffed, sautéed with side dishes, breaded or as an ingredient to enrich sauces, soups, stuffing or entrees.



Crimini

Crimini Often referred to as baby bella (as in Portabella) mushrooms, this variety is similar in appearance to whites but have a light tan to rich brown cap and a firmer texture. They also have a deeper, earthier flavor than white mushrooms. They can be substituted in any recipes specifying white mushrooms when a more full-bodied taste is preferred and they are excellent for both cooking and use in salads.



Portabella

Portabella This variety is a much larger relative to the crimini. Their caps measure up to 6" (15 cm) in diameter and have a substantial texture with a deep, meat-like flavor. Many people find them to be a delicious vegetarian alternative and meat substitute. Portabellas are great for serving whole or sliced, grilled, baked or deep fried as an appetizer, side dish or entrée. They are also great in stir-frys, sautés and sauces.



Shiitake

Shiitake Also known as Chinese black mushrooms, this variety is tan to dark brown in color with broad, umbrella-shaped caps and tan gills. Shiitakes have a rich and woodsy taste with a meaty texture. They are best cooked and adapt well to most cooking techniques. They add a meaty texture and flavor to stir-fries, pastas, soups, entrees and sides.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Mushrooms



Receiving and Handling

Here are some receiving and handling tips for mushrooms.

- Fresh mushrooms are very delicate so it is important to immediately move mushrooms from the refrigerated truck to refrigerated storage or shelves.
- Mushrooms need to breathe. Do not place mushrooms in plastic bags because this will not allow the air to circulate around them. The bags build up condensation and if mushrooms absorb excess water they will soften.
- Mushrooms can bruise easily so handle them as little as possible, and as you do treat them very gently. Don't stack any heavy boxes on fresh mushrooms because this can also cause bruising.

Storage

When storing mushrooms here are some facts to consider:

- The optimum storage temperature for mushrooms is 32°F (0°C) and they like high humidity (90 - 98%). Allowing fresh mushrooms to remain at temperatures above 32°F (0°C) or in low humidity for extended periods of time will lead to rapid dehydration and deterioration which leads to shrink. Some signs of dehydration or deterioration are softness, shriveling, slimy texture or brown spots.
- Store mushrooms in a cool, dry spot closest to the bottom of the cooler to maintain the optimum temperature. Do not store them near a door, in front of or below fans or in a warm room.
- Keep the floors dry to ensure that the mushrooms are not exposed to moisture because if mushrooms absorb excess water they can soften and develop dark spots.
- Mushrooms do not produce ethylene gas and are not sensitive to the effects of it but they are sensitive to odor-producing vegetables, such as onions, carrots and celery and they will pick up those scents so do not store them near those products.
- The typical shelf life of mushrooms is 7 - 14 days.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Mushrooms

Merchandising and Rotation

Here are some tips for merchandising and rotating mushrooms:

- When putting mushrooms on display look for firm mushrooms with a fresh, smooth appearance, free from major blemishes with a dry (but not dried) surface. Keep handling to a minimum and be careful when stacking to avoid bruising.
- Be sure that the temperature of the display case is set at the optimal temperature of 32°F (0°C) and has good air circulation. Avoid blocking air flow to the display.
- Do not stack mushroom packages more than two high because this can cause bruising and restrict airflow.
- Keep mushrooms separate from other odor producing items such as onions, carrots or celery because they can easily pick up those scents.
- Do not expose mushrooms to misters. If they absorb excess moisture they can soften and develop dark spots.
- Promote mushrooms consistently year-round and feature all the different varieties your store carries, not just the more commonly known varieties.
- Make mushrooms a destination category. Whenever possible, include pamphlets in your displays that highlight mushroom selection, health benefits, storage tips, recipes and preparation. This will help to encourage your customers to try new varieties and increase repeat purchases.
- Look for opportunities to cross merchandise by providing complementary items with the mushrooms. Consider setting up your display near the lettuce and leafy greens and, depending on the shelf space and inventory available, you may want to consider setting up a secondary display near the packaged salad selection. Consider promoting mushrooms in other sections of the store, such as the meat department.
- Proper rotation of mushrooms is extremely important, so rotate them as you restock throughout the day using the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule. For both bulk and pre-packaged mushrooms, continually move the older product forward and place the newer product behind – and remember to be careful because mushrooms can bruise easily.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Mushrooms



Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- To keep displays looking fresh and vibrant, **cull** any mushrooms that are soft, shriveled or have brown spots.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Keep mushrooms in original packaging until ready to use. Once opened, store unwashed fresh mushrooms in a brown paper bag in the refrigerator.
- Fresh, raw mushrooms should never be frozen.
- Handle mushrooms with care because fresh mushrooms bruise easily.
- Don't wash mushrooms before storing them because if mushrooms absorb excess water they will soften.
- When ready to use quickly rinse in cool water and drain. Shake gently to remove excess water and pat dry.
- Consume mushrooms within 5 - 7 days of purchase.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Mushrooms



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Mushrooms

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Mushroom Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of both bulk (loose) and packaged mushrooms of all varieties. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect each package and ensure that only the best quality are being sold. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Optional Task: Build or rebuild a secondary display of mushroom to cross-sell with salad items or the meat department to cross-sell with steaks, shops and burgers.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Mushrooms

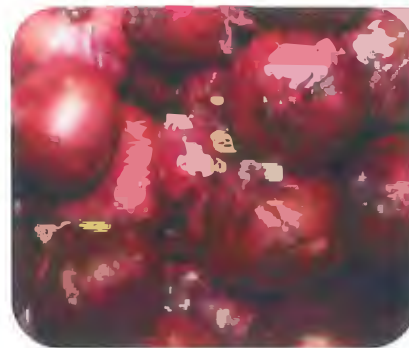
As your store receives shipments of mushrooms, be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Check to ensure all mushrooms in the stock room are being held as close as possible to 32°F (0°C) with high humidity in the range of 90 - 98%.
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Onions



Overview

Onions are a staple in most kitchens because they are used in a wide array of delicious recipes which makes them a top selling produce item.

Availability Year-round

Many varieties of onions are available year-round and are grown throughout the United States. Sweet onions rely on specific types of regional soil to give them their sweet flavor. Other western countries that grow onions include Canada, Mexico and Peru.

Ethylene-sensitive No

Onions are not sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will not impact the shelf-life of onions.

Ethylene-producer No

Onions do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive Yes

Onions are sensitive to other odor-producing products.

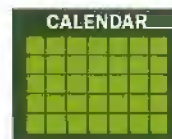
Odor-producer Yes

Onions are strong odor-producers and they can greatly impact the quality of produce items that are sensitive to odor.

Misting No

Onions should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Understanding some basic information about how to properly store and stock onions can not only mean reduced shrink in your department, but more happy customers and increased profits too.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Onions

Popular Varieties

Here are the most popular onion varieties:



Spanish

Spanish This medium-sized onion is popular in the United States and is sometimes known as a Sweet Onion. Spanish onions are round to bulb shaped and typically have yellow skin over white flesh, although red and white types are common. They are juicy with a creamy, sweet, mild flavor and are eaten raw and cooked. This variety is available March through September.



Pearl

Pearl These onions are never larger than 1" (2.5 cm) in diameter and can have smooth gold, red or white skin with white flesh. They have a sweet, tangy flavor and are good for soups, stews, casseroles or pickling. This variety is available year-round.



Shallots

Shallots This variety is a member of the onion family, but is shaped more like a bulb of garlic with a head composed of multiple cloves. Each clove is covered with a thin, papery skin. The shallot has much thinner layers and a more delicate membrane than the other types of onion. The outside dry skins are reddish brown and the flesh is tinged with either purple or green between the layers.

Quality shallot bulbs should be firm and well shaped. Shallots have a more distinct, sweet, intense and complex flavor than other types of onions. They are primarily used in cooking savory dishes. Shallots are available year-round.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Onions



Storage

Here are some storage tips for onions.

- Store in a dry, well ventilated area. For short-term storage (7 days or less) hold onions at 60 - 65°F (15.5 - 18.3°C) and a high humidity level (85 - 95%). For extended storage (longer than 7 days), hold onions at 32 - 36°F (0 - 2.2°C) and medium humidity level (60 - 65%).
- Don't store dry onions below 32°F (0°C) because they could suffer freeze damage which would be evident by water-soaked spots.
- Do not store onions near odor-sensitive items. Although onions do not produce ethylene gas they do produce odors that will be absorbed by items such as apples, celery and pears.
- Keep dry onions in a dark area and out of sunlight because they could develop green spots if exposed to sunlight.
- Onions do not ripen after they are harvested.

Merchandising

Here are some tips for merchandising onions:

- Select onions for display that have dry, papery skins. Discard onions with soft spots or green sprouts.
- Display onions in wide, shallow bins that are clean, dry and unrefrigerated. This increases the visual appeal with minimal risk of bruising or rotting from stacking too deep. Although this may require more frequent restocking it has been shown to result in increased onion sales which means increased profit for your department.
- If you have the space onions are great for building large, secondary bins or table displays.
- Display all varieties of onions together to create a more colorful, attractive and enticing display.
- Offer information for the customer that details flavor, cooking instructions and usages of each type of onion available.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Onions

Rotating

Here are some rotating tips for onions:

- When rotating onions remove all product from display, fill the display with new product and place older product that is still fresh, blemish-free, dry and of good color on the top of or in the front of the display. Do not put any poor quality product back into the display.
- Onions are very susceptible to decay and bruising. Be sure to *cull* out all old product regularly because once an onion begins to decay, it will accelerate the decay in the onions next to it. Decaying onions have a bad odor and attract fruit flies to the display, both of which will give your customers a very bad opinion of your department.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Consumers can store onions up to two weeks in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place.
- Discard any onions that develop sprouts.
- Store onions away from potatoes.
- Once cut, onions should be wrapped tightly and refrigerated for 2 - 3 days.
- Storing uncut sweet onions in the refrigerator can help to extend their shelf-life.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Onions



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Onions

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____



Build An Onion Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of onions offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each onion or bag of onions to ensure that only the best quality are being sold. Even the smallest evidence of one moldy or rotten onion in a bag can spread to the rest. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Onions

As your store receives shipments of onions be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all onions are being stored in a dry, well-ventilated area. For short-term storage (7 days or less) onions should be held between 60 - 65°F (15.5 - 18.3°C) with a high humidity level (85 - 95%). For extended storage hold onions at 32 - 36°F (0 - 2.2°C) and medium humidity level (60 - 65%). Never hold product at less than 36°F (0°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

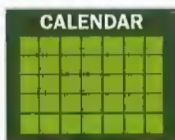
Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Oranges

Overview

Oranges are always one of the most popular produce items among consumers because of their refreshing flavor, health benefits and versatility. They are low-calorie, fat-free, sodium-free and cholesterol-free. They are also an excellent source of fiber and are high in vitamin C. Not only do oranges make for a healthy snack or juice beverage, they are also a great addition to appetizers, salads and desserts.



Availability Year-round

Within the United States, the most popular varieties of oranges are available year-round, and the principle growing regions are Florida, California, Arizona and Texas.



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Oranges are sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will impact the shelf-life of oranges.



Ethylene-producer No

Oranges do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.



Odor-sensitive Yes

Oranges are sensitive to odors from other produce items, like onions.



Odor-producer Yes

Oranges are an odor-producing item and they can impact the quality of other items that are sensitive to odor.



Misting No

Oranges should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

By understanding how to handle, merchandise and sell oranges effectively you will increase your profits, reduce shrink and make your customers happy shoppers.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Oranges



Popular Varieties

Here are the most popular varieties of oranges:

Navel This is one of the most popular orange varieties sold in the United States. It gets its name from the navel-like protrusion on the blossom end of the orange. This variety is easy to peel and virtually seedless with a sweet and juicy flavor. It is excellent for eating out of hand or serving raw in salads.



Navel

Valencia This is another popular orange in the United States and is good as a juicing orange or for eating out of hand as a healthful snack. It is medium to large in size and has a smooth, thin skin.



Valencia

Blood This orange has a subtle taste with raspberry and strawberry overtones and is sweet, very juicy and less acidic than other oranges. The skin texture is slightly rough and wrinkled while the flesh is red or burgundy. Blood orange sections will enliven any salad or fruit mixture. As a garnish, they are unbeatable with their showy color. Within the United States this orange is grown in Florida and California and is available October through May.

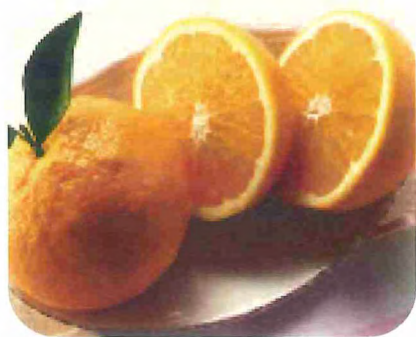


Blood

Temple This orange is a cross between a tangerine and an orange. The skin texture is slightly rough and the skin tone is red-orange. It has a sweet, slightly spicy taste and is excellent for eating out of hand, sliced into salads, or juicing. It is grown in Arizona, California and Florida with availability from January through March.



Temple



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Oranges

Receiving and Handling

Here are some receiving and handling tips for oranges:

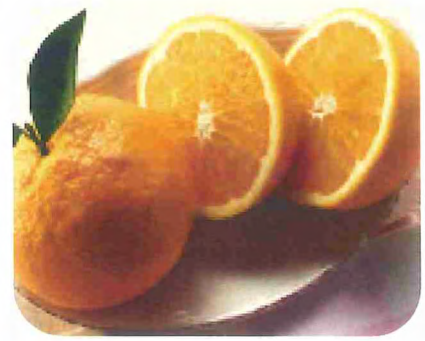
- Oranges must be kept cool so it is important to immediately move them from the refrigerated truck to refrigerated storage or shelves.
- You will probably receive oranges from several states including Florida, Arizona, Texas and California. Regardless of where they come from you should check to make sure that all the oranges are firm, heavy for their size and have an unbroken skin. The heavier an orange is in proportion to its size, the more juice it contains.
- The skin color of ripe oranges ranges from orange to greenish-orange. Many oranges go through a *regreening* process while still on the tree. This means the skin color begins to turn from orange back to green. Regreening is a natural occurrence and does not affect the flavor quality of the orange.
- Oranges do not ripen after they are picked.
- Handle carefully and do not drop shipping containers on the floor because this can cause bruising.

Storage

Here are some tips for storing oranges:

- Store oranges at 32 - 36°F (0 - 1.1°C) with high humidity (85 - 90%).
- To avoid chill injury to oranges do not store oranges below 32°F (0°C). Be aware that the damage from chill injury may not be apparent until the oranges are returned to a warmer temperature.
- Store oranges away from ethylene-producing items such as apples, avocados, bananas, peaches, pears, tomatoes or ripening rooms. Skin deterioration and flesh decay are indications of ethylene exposure.
- Oranges are an odor-producer meaning that they will produce an odor that can be absorbed by other items that are susceptible, so store oranges away from items such as apples, celery and pears.
- To avoid molding store orange containers off the floor in a well ventilated area and prevent them from becoming damp.
- The average shelf life of properly refrigerated oranges is 56 - 84 days. Do not hold oranges for longer periods of time because the longer the oranges are stored, the greater the incidence of decay.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Oranges



Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising and rotating tips for oranges:

- The best quality oranges should be firm and heavy for their size with unbroken skin.
- When picking oranges for display choose only ripe oranges. Ripe oranges are firm, should feel heavy for their size and may show a slight greening. You may notice that some oranges have a rough brown spot on the skin – this is called *russeting* and does not affect the flavor.
- Handle oranges carefully when displaying to avoid bruising.
- Hand stack oranges of similar size and display them with the blossom end up. Oranges can tolerate being gently dumped so it is okay to build a large display, just be sure your display always looks neat, clean and attractive.
- *Cull* any decayed oranges out of the display. If you're displaying bagged oranges check the bags and cull any bags that contain decaying oranges.
- If the orange loses its luster or if the skin looks dehydrated it has lost its eye appeal which means it's lost its buy appeal and it should be removed from the display.
- Also *cull* fruit on which the stem end appears dried and withered. Immediately remove any decayed fruit from displays or storage.
- Make sure signage is correct relating to variety, origin and pricing.
- Try to display bagged oranges so that their labels are visible.
- Build mass primary displays and secondary bin or table displays.
- Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rotation method and remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Storing oranges in the pantry or in a warm or non-refrigerated area will promote decay and molding.
- Do not throw away oranges if they have a rough brown spot on the skin. This is due to *russeting* and it does not affect the flavor of the orange.
- If oranges are going to be stored in the refrigerator, as long as they are kept at the proper temperature they will stay good for up to two weeks.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Oranges



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Oranges

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build An Orange Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of oranges offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each orange or bag of oranges to ensure that only the best quality are being sold. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Oranges

As your store receives shipments of oranges be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all oranges are being held at the correct control points: 32 - 36°F (0 - 1.1°C) with high humidity (85 - 90%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled and stacked according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peaches



Overview

Peaches are one of consumers' favorite fruit. Their sweet taste, smooth texture and wonderful aroma make them attractive. Peaches are a relatively delicate fruit and require careful handling to make sure that your customers get the best possible taste experience.

Availability Mostly Summer - Fall

California is the largest producer of peaches in the USA. Depending on the time of year, they can also come from Georgia, South Carolina and northwestern states too. Domestic peaches are available from June to October. Off-season peaches are imported, typically from South America.

Ethylene-sensitive No

Peaches are not sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will not impact the shelf-life of peaches.

Ethylene-producer Yes

Peaches release ethylene gas and will impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive No

Peaches are not sensitive to odors from other produce items, like onions.

Odor-producer No

Peaches are not an odor-producer and they will not impact the quality of other items.

Misting No

Peaches should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

By understanding how to handle, merchandise and sell peaches you will help your department increase profits, reduce shrink and make your customers return for more.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peaches



White



Donut



Yellow

Popular Varieties

While there are hundreds of varieties of peaches. The most important distinction for produce clerks to know is the distinction between the yellow and white fleshed varieties.

White Peach These varieties tend to have lower levels of acid, which gives them a milder and sweeter taste. Their flesh is a very light and pale yellow color. You will occasionally come across some special and unique varieties of white peaches, such as the Donut Peach variety.

Yellow Peach This peach is ideal for baking and eating out-of-hand. They have a bold peach fragrance and tend to be tangy and more acidic than white peaches.

Storage

Here are some storage tips for peaches:

- Peaches require extra attention if you are going to present the best possible product to your customers. Storage at improper temperatures is one of the most common retail mistakes so monitor your temperatures closely.
- The optimum storage temperature for peaches is 31 - 32°F (-0.6 - 0.0°C) and 51 - 77°F (10.6 - 25°C). The cold temperature keep peaches from ripening further.
- Different suppliers will often provide you with their specific storage recommendations based on the unique varieties and growing regions of their fruit.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peaches



Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising and rotating tips for peaches:

- Always place peaches on display by hand stacking them no more than two fruit high. This is one of the most common retail mistakes with peaches so pay careful attention to the depth of your displays.
- Display peaches out of refrigeration so that their enticing aroma is more noticeable. Let the aroma of tree-ripe peaches sell the fruit for you.
- Peaches are often an impulse buy so be sure displays are colorful, big and in visible, high-traffic areas of your department.
- Utilize secondary displays in key areas of the store to help you take advantage of cross-promotion opportunities. Consider the dairy or bakery departments.
- Promote peaches heavily in July, August and September during peak volumes. Cross-promote with other summer fruits, such as nectarines and apricots.
- Offer canning recipes and supplies at the point of sale to boost incremental sales.
- Take oldest product from the cooler to the shelf before next shipment arrives.
- Always display the ripest product on top, keeping it most accessible.
- Follow all company and supplier-specific rotation guidelines.
- Inspect displayed peaches at least every two hours, *culling* out any problems so that the displays have maximum shelf appeal.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- One of the most common mistakes consumers make with peaches is to refrigerate fruit that they want to ripen. Refrigeration slows the ripening process.
- Never expose peaches to direct sunlight. Customers sometimes leave peaches out on a counter near a window because they want the fruit to ripen, but exposure to direct sunlight causes peaches to dry and shrivel.
- Peaches can be ripened quicker at room temperature away from sunlight or in paper bags. Ripe peaches will have a yellow background color (a cream colored yellow on white peaches) with no green around the stem. The aroma of fully ripe peaches is quite distinct. The softer the fruit is the more sweet and juicy it will be.
- Keep ripe peaches in a cool, dry environment.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peaches

On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Peaches

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Peach Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of peaches offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each peach to ensure that only the best quality are being sold and that the ripest peaches are on top with the best side facing the customer. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Peaches

As your store receives shipments of peaches be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all peaches are being held within the optimum control points: 31 - 32°F (-0.6 - 0.0°C).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled and stacked according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peppers



Overview

Peppers are a staple in the produce department because of the variety of uses they have and because they can be consumed raw or can be used in cooking year-round. Peppers are fat-free, sodium-free, cholesterol-free, low in calories and high in vitamins A and C. Red bell peppers are one of the few foods that contain lycopene, which has been found to reduce risk of some kinds of cancer.

Availability Year-round

Within the United States, the most popular varieties of peppers are available year-round. Depending on the time of year, peppers may come from principal growing regions of Florida, California, Georgia, Michigan and New Jersey.

Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Peppers are sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will impact the ripeness, quality and shelf-life of peppers.

Ethylene-producer No

Peppers do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive No

Peppers are sensitive to odors from other produce items, like onions.

Odor-producer No

Peppers are not an odor-producer and they will not impact the quality of other items.

Misting No

Peppers should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Understanding how to properly handle, merchandise and sell peppers will help you reduce shrink, please your customers and increase the profit of your department.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peppers

Popular Varieties

There are scores of pepper varieties that come in many shapes, colors and taste varieties, but there are two types to focus on in context of the Top 20 selling produce items – bell peppers and chili peppers.



Bell



Chili

Bell peppers come in multiple colors from deep green to bright yellow, orange, red and even purple. They are bell-shaped and are generally sweet and crunchy in flavor.

Chili peppers come in different shapes and sizes and can be green or red. Chili peppers range from sweet to very hot and spicy.

Storage

Here are some storage tips for peppers:

- Store in cooler at 45 - 50°F (7.2 - 10°C) with a relative humidity of 85 - 90%.
- Peppers held below 45°F (7.2°C) may develop chill injury and form spots and indentations on the skin, which leads to rapid decay.
- Peppers held above 55°F (12.8°C) for extended periods of time will experience rapid deterioration.
- The typical shelf life of peppers is 8 - 10 days.
- Peppers are ethylene-sensitive so avoid storing them with ethylene-producing fruits and vegetables such as apples, avocados, bananas, melons and tomatoes.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peppers



Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising tips for peppers:

- Choose peppers that have deep, vivid colors, taut skin and are free of soft spots, blemishes and darkened areas. Their stems should be green and fresh looking. Peppers should be heavy for their size and firm enough so that they will gently yield to slight pressure. Avoid peppers that have signs of decay, such as injuries to the skin or water-soaked areas.
- Merchandise peppers on their sides to protect the stem and tops.
- Promote in high-traffic areas, preferably refrigerated.
- Cross merchandise peppers with packaged salads to remind customers that peppers can be a key ingredient in their salads. Peppers can also be promoted in the meat section to support grilling season and drive sales excitement.
- Avoid merchandising peppers on dry tables or in direct sunlight as this will reduce shelf life.
- Peppers are available throughout the year, but are usually in greater abundance during the summer months. Promote as part of summer menus.
- Include signage that shows popular uses for peppers, such as snacking, salads, stir-frys, barbeques, kebabs and fajitas or wraps.

Here are some merchandising and rotating tips for peppers:

- Follow the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule.
- *Cull* daily to keep displays fresh and vibrant.
- If peppers are displayed on a non-refrigerated table, place the product from the cooler below product that has been on display.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Keep peppers refrigerated or in a dry, cool place.
- Don't store peppers in direct sunlight or near fruits or vegetables that produce ethylene gas such as apples, avocados, bananas, melons, pears and tomatoes. Exposure to quick ripening can turn the color of certain peppers, as well as cause them to shrivel, wrinkle and lose their crunch.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Peppers



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Peppers

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build Pepper Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of peppers offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each pepper to ensure that only the best quality are being sold and that the bell peppers are placed so the best side is facing the customer. Peppers offer a great opportunity to use color breaks for visual appeal. If using a non-refrigerated display, ensure that colder items are placed underneath higher temperature items. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Peppers

As your store receives shipments of peppers be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how the boxes/cases are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all peppers are being held in the cooler at the correct control points of 45 - 50°F (7.2 - 10°C) with a relative humidity of 85 - 90%.
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled and stacked according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Potatoes



Overview

Potatoes are among the favorite vegetables of all consumer groups and they are one of the top profit-producers in your department. They are easy to prepare and are used in a variety of dishes.

Availability Year-round

Within the United States, the most popular varieties of potatoes are available year-round. Depending on the time of year, potatoes may come from principal growing regions of Idaho, California, Florida and Michigan.

Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Potatoes are sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will impact the ripeness, quality and shelf-life.

Ethylene-producer No

Potatoes do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.

Odor-sensitive No

Potatoes are not sensitive to odors from other produce items, like onions.

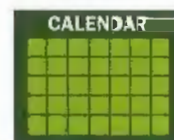
Odor-producer No

Potatoes are not an odor-producer and they will not impact the quality of other items.

Misting No

Potatoes should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Understanding how to handle, merchandise and inform your customers about potatoes will help you increase profits, reduce shrink and create happy, loyal customers.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Potatoes

Popular Varieties

The most popular potato varieties are Russet, White, Yukon Gold and Red (also known as New potatoes).



Russet

Russets are the most common potato variety and are known for their shelf life and versatility. This variety is used in most recipes for baking, boiling, mashing and frying. Russets are high in good carbohydrates and starch. The Burbank Russet is the most common and famous sub-variety because it bakes up with a very fluffy texture.



White

White potatoes have smooth white or off-white skins and white flesh. They also have few eyes, which tend to be shallow. These potatoes have less starch than Russets and are good for boiling, steaming, mashing, and roasting. These potatoes are ideal for soups, salads, and casseroles (scaloped and au gratin).



Yukon Gold

Yukon Gold The skin of a Yukon Gold is smooth and golden white. The light-yellow color of its flesh and thick buttery texture has given this potato a lot of popularity and it is a great boiling (mashing) potato and for baking and making french fries.



Red or New

Red or New potatoes have smooth red skins and white flesh. They should be firm and smooth-skinned with bright red color and just a few shallow eyes. They are firm in texture and lower in starch than Russets or whites and are excellent for boiling, roasting and steaming. These potatoes are also used in soups, salads and casseroles (scaloped and au gratin).

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Potatoes



Handling

Here are some handling tips for potatoes:

- You should handle potatoes with a lot more care than you think. Too often potatoes are thought to be a tough vegetable and bags of potatoes are often tossed carelessly onto display and stacked high to reduce the amount of times it might have to be worked during the day. However, this practice causes problems that shorten shelf-life including excessive bruising.
- Avoid dropping potato cartons or bags.
- Do not mist or allow potatoes to remain wet in storage or on displays. Water can cause rotting and disease problems.

Rotating

Here are some rotating tips for potatoes:

- Observe the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule.
- Potatoes that are spoiled generate a strong, undesirable odor. Be sure to check for odor as you *cull* stock.
- Stock should be rotated a minimum of once a day. Twice is preferred.
- Potatoes need air circulation, so do not stack them high on displays as this reduces air circulation and makes the job of rotation more difficult.

Storage

Here are some storage tips for potatoes:

- Store potatoes in a dry backroom area. The ideal storage temperature is 40 - 46°F (4.4 - 7.8°C); do not allow potatoes to go below 35°F (1.7°C).
- Air circulation is important for potatoes. Store potatoes on pallets, but be sure to leave room between the pallets and the wall for air circulation.
- Minimize exposure to natural and artificial light which can accelerate greening. If the backroom is illuminated, 24/7 covers can be used to reduce the greening effects, but covers must be breathable to allow for air to circulate. Also minimize time on loading docks and other areas where the environment is uncontrolled.
- Do not store or display potatoes near apples or pears because the potatoes will absorb their flavor.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Potatoes

Merchandising Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Only display fresh potatoes. Fresh potatoes will be firm to the touch and absent of cuts, bruises, greening and sprouts.
- *Cull* potatoes if they are greening, sprouting, shriveled, cut or bruised.
- Promote potatoes on dry, non-refrigerated tables. Refrigeration creates humidity and can promote spoilage.
- Displays should be routinely washed and disinfected.
- Limit displays that are placed under direct light. The light promotes greening in potatoes. Breathable covers can be used to cover potatoes during off-peak hours.
- Offer the consumer multiple bag sizes and a good selection of different potato varieties.

Although potatoes have a year-round popularity, customizing your promotions can help ensure maximum year-round sales.

- Popularity peaks through the holiday season (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year).
- During the summer, take advantage of the steak and potato grilling opportunities.
- During cooler weather (November through March), promote potatoes and recipes that will utilize the oven because consumers tend to be inside and the oven heats the home.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Wash potatoes to remove exterior dirt prior to preparation.
- Store potatoes in a dark, cool place in the home. Many consumers store potatoes in the refrigerator. This will cause the starch in potatoes to convert to sugar which can reduce the flavor profile.
- Avoid storing potatoes and onions together. Potatoes are odor-sensitive.
- Clean potatoes under water using a vegetable brush, but do not scrub so hard that you remove the skin. A great deal of potatoes nutritional value is found in the skin.
- Cook potatoes thoroughly, because they must be cooked to be eaten. Many consumers tend to undercook potatoes.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Potatoes



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Potatoes

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____



Build A Potato Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of potatoes offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each loose (bulk) potato and bag of potatoes. Avoid bruised, sprouted or shriveled product from ever being displayed. Make sure all display signage is accurate, complete and in good condition.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Potatoes

As your store receives shipments of potatoes be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how boxes, bags and cases are checked upon arrival for quality, and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent crushing damage. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all potatoes are being held at the correct control points: 40 - 46°F (4.4 - 7.8°C) in an area with good air circulation. Do not store potatoes near any odor producing items.
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled and stacked according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Squash

Overview

Squash is a popular vegetable category and is available year-round. The many varieties appeal to most consumers which keeps this vegetable in the Top 20 best selling produce items.



Availability Year-round (peak varies by type)

Different types of squash have different peak times on the calendar, depending on whether it's a summer or fall/winter variety. Growing regions are Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Georgia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Canada and Mexico.



Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Squash are sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will impact the ripeness, quality and shelf-life.



Ethylene-producer No

Squash do not release ethylene gas and will not impact the ripening of other produce items.



Odor-sensitive No

Squash are not sensitive to odors from other produce items, like onions.



Odor-producer No

Squash are not an odor-producer and they will not impact the quality of other items.



Misting No

Squash should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Understanding how to handle, merchandise and inform your customers about squash will help you increase profits, reduce shrink and maintain happy customers.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Squash



Popular Varieties

Squash varieties can be divided into summer and fall/winter types. The following three are considered summer squashes.

Summer Squash

Crookneck This squash can be cylindrical or can have a crooked neck with a bulging end. This yellow squash has edible skin with a sweet tasting flesh and is the mildest of the summer squash. The crookneck variety has a bumpy skin and its standard size is 6 - 8" in length.



Crookneck

Zucchini, Green or Italian This can grow up to 18" in length. It has a mild taste and edible skin. In addition to use in stews and side dishes, zucchini is used to make zucchini bread.



Zucchini

Other Varieties There are many varieties of summer squash that can be found depending on availability. Two of the more exotic varieties include **Chayote Squash** and **Pattypan** and they can be used to add color and excitement to a display.



Chayote

Fall and Winter Squash

Fall and Winter squash include a wide range of varieties such as, **Acorn, Buttercup, Butternut, Hubbard, Spaghetti, Pumpkin** and **Kabocha**. These varieties tend to have a naturally sweeter flavor than the summer varieties with a texture similar to a yam or sweet potato.



Acorn



Butternut



Spaghetti



Pattypan



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Squash

Storage and Handling

Here are some storage and handling tips for squash:

- It is important to remember that there are different ways for handling summer and winter squash.
- Summer squash should be held at 45 - 50°F (7.2 - 10°C) and at high humidity (85 - 95%). Hard and winter varieties should be held at 54 - 59°F (12.2 - 15°C) and at medium-high humidity (50 - 70%).
- Bruising, scuffing and compression injury are very common so handle squash gently.
- Summer squash should not be stored, ideally, for longer than 10 days; however, zucchini squash has been stored at 41°F (5.0°C) with acceptable market quality for up to two weeks. Squash will begin shriveling, yellowing and decaying after two weeks of storage.
- Storage below 41°F (5.0°C) for more than 3 or 4 days will generally result in chilling injury. Chilling injury will result in deterioration of visual and sensory quality, surface pitting and discoloration or browning.

Here are some storage and handling tips for pre-cut or pre-packaged items:

- Store at 34°F (1.1°C). It is very important to maintain the recommended temperatures.
- Follow the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule.
- Carefully check and follow *BIUB* (Best If Used By) by dates.
- If the package is bulging or swelling remove it from display and discard immediately regardless of the sell-by date.
- Inspect the product regularly for slime or other signs of breakdown. Never leave marginal pre-cut product on display.

Rotating

Here are some rotating tips for squash:

- Summer squash should be *culled* at least twice a day.
- Remove summer squash from retail displays when you see signs of shriveling, yellowing/browning, surface pitting and decay.
- Also remove any product that is moldy, limp or rubbery.

Merchandising

Here are some merchandising tips for squash:

- When putting squash on display look for squash with glossy skin. Dull skin indicates that it is past its prime.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Squash



Merchandising (continued)

- Hand-stack product on displays. Squash should not be stacked more than three to four layers deep and should be arranged carefully so they do not fall off the rack.
- Squash displays should be refrigerated but direct contact with ice should be avoided as it can cause physical damage as well as chilling injury.
- Do not mist.
- Any summer squash over 8" long is overgrown and will have less taste than a smaller squash.

Promote the great taste and nutritional components.

- Summer squash is an excellent source of manganese and vitamin C. It is also a very good source of magnesium, vitamin A, dietary fiber, potassium, copper, folate and phosphorous. In addition, summer squash is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B1, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, calcium, zinc, niacin and protein.
- Winter squash is rich in beta carotene, iron, vitamin C and potassium. It has smaller amounts of calcium, folic acid and B vitamins.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department, so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Select summer squash that's small and firm. The smaller the squash, the more tasty it will be.
- Summer squash has a limited shelf-life and should be used within a week of purchasing.
- Summer squash is ready to eat and does not require ripening. To store summer squash place it, unwashed, in plastic bags in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Wash the squash just before preparation. Unlike winter squash, summer squash can be eaten raw or cooked including the rind and seeds.
- Choose winter squash that has a skin free of blemishes or signs of bruising. Winter squash are ready to prepare and do not require ripening. To prepare winter squash, cut the top (stem end) and then with a heavy knife slice the squash lengthwise. Clean the interior, cube the squash and cut off the rind. The skin of winter squash should not be eaten. Squash can be baked, roasted, microwaved or steamed.
- Despite the differences in size, shape and color, hard winter squashes can be used interchangeably in most recipes.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Squash



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Squash

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____

Build A Squash Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild the displays of summer and hard (fall/winter) squash offered in your store. This means starting with empty, clean displays and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each summer squash and use yellow-green color breaks for visual appeal. Displays of fall/winter squash can be simple, but at peak times they often call for a lot of design expertise and creativity. Work closely with your manager to gain this valuable experience.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Squash

As your store receives shipments of squash be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how cases of product are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage or quality loss. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all squash are being held at the correct control points: Summer 45 - 50°F (7.2 - 10°C) with high humidity (85 - 95%); Fall/winter 54 - 59°F (12.2 - 15°C) and at medium-high humidity (70 - 75%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First-In, First-Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled and stacked according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes



Overview

One of the most popular items sold in the produce department, tomatoes are extremely versatile and are considered a staple in many cuisines around the world. Botanically, tomatoes are a fruit although many people consider them a vegetable because they are used like a vegetable in so many savory recipes. They can be served raw, broiled, baked, fried, grilled, sautéed or stewed.

Availability Year-round (May - August peak)

Different types of tomatoes have different peak times on the calendar. Many states grow tomatoes, however, California and Florida are the primary suppliers for U.S. consumption. Tomatoes are available year-round in the United States with peak supplies available from May to August.

Ethylene-sensitive Yes

Green (unripe) tomatoes are sensitive to ethylene gas. Exposure to ethylene-producing products will impact the ripeness of tomatoes.

Ethylene-producer Yes

Tomatoes (both ripe and unripe) release ethylene gas and they can impact the ripening of other produce items if stored nearby.

Odor-sensitive No

Tomatoes are not sensitive to odors from other produce items, like onions.

Odor-producer No

Tomatoes are not an odor-producer and they will not impact the quality of other items.

Misting No

Tomatoes should not be misted as this reduces their shelf-life.

Understanding how to handle, merchandise and inform your customers about tomatoes will help you increase profits, reduce shrink and maintain happy customers.





Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes

Popular Varieties

While there are many varieties, colors and sizes of tomatoes – the best quality tomatoes have a full, bright, even color and are plump, firm and heavy in relation to their size. The most popular varieties of tomatoes are Beefsteak, Cherry, Pear, Plum or Italian, Round Slicer and Vine-Ripened.



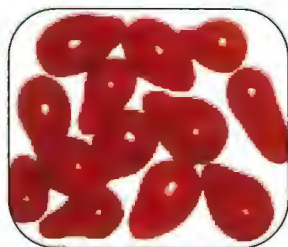
Beefsteak

Beefsteak The Beefsteak tomato is large with thick, juicy, firm flesh and a sweet, tender and slightly tangy taste. The skin texture is smooth, shiny and firm and its shape is oblate or slightly flattened. It is most commonly used in salads, sandwiches, salsa, chili, stews and casseroles. It can also be served stuffed or broiled.



Cherry

Cherry This small, round tomato is very sweet and flavorful. It is deep red or yellow in color with smooth skin. The flesh is soft and tender when ripe and may contain a few edible seeds. They are best eaten raw, chopped into salads or out of hand.



Pear

Pear or Teardrop These small tomatoes are either red or yellow and have a teardrop shape. They have a rich flavor with low acidity. The skin texture is soft and smooth and the flesh is soft and juicy and may contain small, edible seeds. They are great for eating out of hand or adding to salads.



Plum

Plum or Italian The most common variety is the Roma. It is medium-sized, oval-shaped and either red or yellow in color. It has smooth skin and a slightly sweet, flavorful taste. It is excellent eaten out of hand or for use in canning or making tomato sauce.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes



Popular Varieties (continued)

Round Slicer or Globe Traditionally this tomato is the most uniform in size and rounded in shape of all the tomato varieties. It is medium in size with smooth skin and can be either red or yellow in color. The flesh is soft and very juicy when ripe and may contain edible seeds. This tomato provides a somewhat mild flavor and is usually eaten raw. However, it may also be cooked into dishes that call for tomatoes.



Round Slicer

Vine-Ripened These round red tomatoes have very delicate flesh that is described as soft and juicy and the taste is sweet and very flavorful when ripe. They may contain edible seeds. Vine-ripened tomatoes are excellent for eating out of hand, chopped into salads, canned, stewed or juiced with other vegetables.



Vine-Ripened

Receiving and Handling

Here are some receiving and handling tips for tomatoes:

- Inspect tomatoes immediately upon arrival to ensure that the degree of ripeness, size and quality is consistent with order specifications.
- To prevent bruising and possible spoilage, handle tomatoes with care – do not drop shipping containers on the floor. Bruising can increase the rate of deterioration.
- Handle tomatoes stem up to help preserve quality and protect the shoulders from bruising.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes

Storage

Here are some storing tips for tomatoes:

- Tomatoes are very susceptible to chill injury and should not be stored below 60°F (15.6°C). Ideally, tomatoes should be stored in a dry area at 60 - 65°F (15.6 - 18.3°C) with a relatively high humidity level (85 - 95%). Symptoms of chill injury include decay, softening, loss of flavor and failure of mature green tomatoes to ripen properly. This is one of the most important things to remember about storing tomatoes so your customers get the taste and texture they are expecting.
- In addition to chill injury, tomatoes are sensitive to temperatures that are too warm. Exposing tomatoes to temperatures above 86°F (30.0°C) for longer than a few hours will result in uneven color development of mature green tomatoes.
- Most tomatoes are picked mature but not completely ripened so they do continue to ripen after they have been harvested.
- Ripe tomatoes are not sensitive to ethylene but unripe tomatoes are sensitive to ethylene – both produce ethylene.
- Because unripe tomatoes are ethylene-sensitive they should be stored away from any other fruit that produces ethylene such as apples, avocados, bananas or peaches. Exposure to ethylene-producing items may promote rapid ripening.
- Store tomatoes stem up to help preserve quality and protect the shoulders from bruising.
- Store containers off the floor to keep them from getting damp. Moisture accumulation on or in the containers during storage may also promote product decay.
- If ripe tomatoes must be placed in a cooler, wrap the boxes in thermal blankets and store near the cooler door to reduce the possibility of chill injury.
- Maintain moderate air circulation and inspect tomatoes daily when they are in storage.
- The typical storage life of tomatoes is 7 - 14 days. Fully ripened tomatoes will hold at room temperature for about 2 - 3 days.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes



Merchandising and Rotating

Here are some merchandising and rotating tips for tomatoes:

- When putting tomatoes on display look for tomatoes that have bright, shiny, even colored skin and firm flesh. Avoid tomatoes that are soft or mushy, lacking in color, have blemishes or growth cracks, or are under-ripe. Ripe tomatoes are plump, firm and heavy in relation to their size and will yield slightly to pressure.
- Display tomatoes on dry, non-refrigerated tables. Refrigeration removes the flavor and causes customer dissatisfaction. Cold temperature turns the sugar to starch, reducing the flavor profile of the tomato. It can also cause shriveling and interior breakdown of the tomato walls.
- Keep tomatoes away from misting systems because moisture accumulation on or in the containers may promote product decay.
- Display tomatoes no more than two layers deep and keep the stems up to avoid bruising. Display the oldest product on top, keeping it most accessible.
- Do not dump tomatoes on the display because this could cause bruising and does not look appealing to customers. Instead, hand-stack tomatoes to create a more controlled, professional and attractive display. Remember, to the customer eye appeal is buy appeal.
- Also, display a variety of types and sizes along with ideas for how to use each. For example, Cherry varieties are good for salads, and Beefsteak or Vine-Ripened are good for cooking or adding to sandwiches.
- *Cull* any tomatoes that are soft or mushy, lacking in color or have blemishes or growth cracks. At least every two hours make a quick pass through the tomato display. Culling out any problems will give your display maximum visual appeal.
- Proper rotation should take place by color stage. A greener tomato should never be placed on top of a ripe red tomato. Remember to display the oldest product on top keeping it most accessible.

Here are some tips for promoting tomatoes and maximizing sales

- When possible cross merchandise tomatoes with another item that complements tomatoes. Since ripe tomatoes are not ethylene-sensitive, it is okay to cross merchandise them with avocados, onions or basil – all items that go great with tomatoes. Cross-merchandising is a good way to drive additional sales in your department because it makes things more convenient for your customers by making them aware of options they might not have considered. Although they may not have been planning to purchase these items, when they see how appealing the items look on your display they are more likely to want to buy them.



Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes

Merchandising and Rotating (continued)

- Promote tomatoes heavily during the summer months, as they are extremely popular and are considered a staple for burgers, sandwiches, salads and side dishes. You should also promote tomatoes in January. January tomatoes are sold primarily with salads and the New Year's pledge of dieting.
- Display bulk tomatoes along with pre-packaged tomatoes because this can help differentiate the varieties and help build category profitability. This also offers consumers a unique opportunity to purchase larger quantities of tomatoes versus buying individually.
- Remember to restock just before and after your rush hours in your produce department so your display always looks fresh and plentiful.

Customer Tips

Here are some tips you can share with your customers:

- Do not refrigerate tomatoes at home because cold temperature turns their sugars to starch, reducing the flavor profile of the tomato. It can also cause shriveling and interior breakdown of the tomato walls.
- Handle tomatoes stem up to help preserve quality.
- Handle tomatoes with care because they can bruise easily and this can cause them to spoil quickly.
- You can ripen tomatoes at home by leaving them on the counter or in a brown paper bag for a couple of days.
- Wash tomatoes just before you are ready to eat them because moisture accumulation may promote product decay.
- Promote the great taste and nutritional components to customers. Tomatoes are a low-calorie item. For example, a medium size tomato only has about 35 calories. They are also fat-free, saturated fat-free, cholesterol-free, very low in sodium, high in vitamin C and a good source of vitamin A and potassium. Additionally, tomatoes contain lycopene, which may lower heart disease and the risk of some cancers.

Top 20 Product Fact Sheet: Tomatoes



On-the-Job Learning Exercises: Tomatoes

The following exercises can be done to maximize your expertise on these produce items.

TRAINEE NAME: _____



Build A Tomato Display

Under the guidance of your manager, build or rebuild all the displays tomatoes offered in your store. This means starting with emptied and cleaned display bins and building or replenishing them according to your store's specifications using identified techniques. Carefully inspect and hand-stack each tomato, cluster or carton of product and use a mixture of sizes, varieties, loose (bulk), packages/cartons and colors to create visual appeal. Usually a company *plan-o-gram* or other material should be consulted. Avoid stacking tomatoes more than two-deep and stack older; riper product on top of greener items.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The finished display meets the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____

Receive and Store Tomatoes

As your store receives shipments of tomatoes be involved to help in the receiving process, paying attention to how cases of product are checked upon arrival for quality and how they are carefully stacked and stored to prevent damage or quality loss. Pay attention to the following:

- Storage temperature: Ensure all tomatoes are being held at the correct control points of 60 - 65°F (15.6 - 18.3°C) with a relatively high humidity level (85 - 95%).
- Product rotation: Use the *FIFO* (First In, First Out) rule to ensure that all cases/boxes of product on storage shelves are clearly dated or labeled and stacked according to company standards.

Sign-off: All tasks were completed. The trainee's efforts have met the quality standards set by our company.

Manager/Training Coach: _____ Date: _____





Top 20 Produce Items: Certificate Checklist

Product	Manager Initial	Date
Apples		
Avocados		
Bananas		
Berries		
Broccoli		
Carrots		
Celery		
Cherries		
Cucumbers		
Grapes		
Lettuce		
Melons		
Mushrooms		
Onions		
Oranges		
Peaches		
Peppers		
Potatoes		
Squash		
Tomatoes		

Trainee Signature

Manager Signature

Date

Date

Continual Development



Congratulations!

Once you have gained your manager's initials for each of the twenty produce items on the checklist, you have completed the Top 20 Produce Items training program. This knowledge will take you far along the journey of becoming a true produce expert.

Best of fortune to you as you apply your new product knowledge to thrill your customers and help your store achieve its financial goals.

Continual Development

Now that you have a solid foundation of the top-selling items in the industry, it is time to expand this knowledge through a plan for continual development.

Arrange to meet with your manager to determine these goals together. Use the development plan on the following page to determine exactly what goals you should focus on, and which actions should be taken to accomplish them.



Development Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Completed (Mgr Initial)							
Follow-up Date							
Team Member Mentor							
Actions to Take							
Development Plan							



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