



Extend the life of your fruits and veggies

Did you know that over one-third of all food in America goes to waste? In the US, people waste 80 million tons of food every year – translating into roughly 149 billion meals and over \$444 billion worth of food. Food waste, which emits tremendous amounts of methane gas in landfills, is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions – the equivalent to that of 37 million cars.

As consumers, we all have a role to play in reducing food waste. According to the USDA, households could save about \$370 per person, per year by taking simple steps towards reducing food waste (think of what a family of 4 could do with an extra \$1500!) Every little effort counts towards making a difference.

By properly storing and handling produce, both your wallet and the environment will thank you! Here are some practical tips to help you extend the life of your fruits and veggies:

What, where, how, and how long: Different fruits and vegetables have specific storage requirements. For instance, storing apples in the refrigerator can help them last longer, while potatoes should be kept in a cool, dark place away from onions to prevent them from sprouting. Here is a comprehensive fruit and veggie storage guide.

Let them breathe. Invest in produce baskets or breathable bags to store fruits and vegetables. These containers allow for air circulation, preventing moisture buildup and slowing down the ripening and decaying process.

Separate those ethylene producers. Some fruits, such as bananas and avocados, release a natural gas called ethylene, which speeds up the ripening of other produce. Keep ethylene-producing fruits away from ethylene-sensitive ones to prevent premature spoilage.

It's a wrap. To keep leafy greens like lettuce and spinach fresh, wrap them in paper towels before storing them in the refrigerator. The paper towels absorb excess moisture, preventing wilting and prolonging freshness.

Freeze! If you find yourself with excess fruits or vegetables that you won't be able to use before they spoil, consider freezing them. Many fruits and vegetables can be frozen for later use in soups, smoothies, or sauces. Some veggies need to be blanched (boiled briefly) first – here is a handy guide.

Repurpose. Toss those leftover green beans into tonight's casserole. Turn that uneaten baked potato into home fries. Chop up last night's sliced tomatoes and stuff into your lunch burrito.

Revive and rescue. Don't throw away wilted produce just yet! Some fruits and vegetables can be revived by soaking them in ice water for a few minutes or storing them in a container of ice water in the refrigerator overnight. You can also make a quick soup with wilted veggies - just chop and cook in 2 quarts of simmering stock or bouillon for a healthy base, and add grains like cooked barley and/or beans for a healthy meal in a bowl.

Crunchy Broccoli Slaw with Peanut Dressing



Don't discard those broccoli stems! Here is a super tasty and nutritious way to enjoy broccoli after the florets have been gobbled up.

Ingredients:

Dressing:

- 1 tbsp agave nectar or maple syrup
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar or fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp low sodium soy sauce
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- 3+ tbsp water
- 2 tsp minced fresh ginger or jarred ginger paste
- 2 tsp minced garlic or jarred garlic paste
- 1 tsp crushed red pepper (optional)

For Salad:

- 4 cups shredded broccoli stems (or slice into matchsticks)
- 1½ cups shredded red or purple cabbage
- 1½ cups shredded carrots
- Crushed peanuts
- ¼ cup cilantro or parsley leaves (optional)

Combine all dressing ingredients in a medium bowl. Start with 3 tbsp water and add more until desired consistency is reached. Toss with salad ingredients and serve.

Variations: Add in a handful of fresh shelled edamame, a sprinkling of sesame seeds, and/or chopped green onions.