

## Sell-by, best-by, use-by: What do food date labels really mean?

With one exception, it's not about food safety.

Date labels are confusing and can lead to needlessly throwing away good food. With the exception of infant formula, product dating is set by manufacturers to indicate the latest date for peak quality, not safety. Even if the date expires, a product should be safe, wholesome and of good quality if stored and handled properly.

See the USDA's Food Product Dating fact sheet at [fsis.usda.gov](http://fsis.usda.gov) for more information.

### Food product dating de-mystified:



**Use by:** Last date recommended by manufacturer for peak quality.



**Sell by:** Manufacturer's date to tell store how long to display item for sale.



**Best before/best by:** Manufacturer's recommended date for optimal flavor/quality.



**Closed or coded dates:** Packing numbers for manufacturers.



## Wasted food = wasted resources

The average American household wastes about 25% of the food they buy – especially produce. When we throw away food, we also waste significant amounts of water, energy, fuel, fertilizer, time and money used to produce, package and transport it.

Small changes can  
make a BIG difference!

## What about composting?

Composting is great for food that cannot be eaten (banana peels, egg shells) or has spoiled (moldy leftovers, rotten fruits or vegetables). What's even *better* is to not waste food in the first place.

As much as possible,  
buy what you need  
– eat what you buy.

Visit [www.dakotacounty.us](http://www.dakotacounty.us),  
search *prevent food waste*  
for more tips and tools  
about how to prevent food  
waste at home.

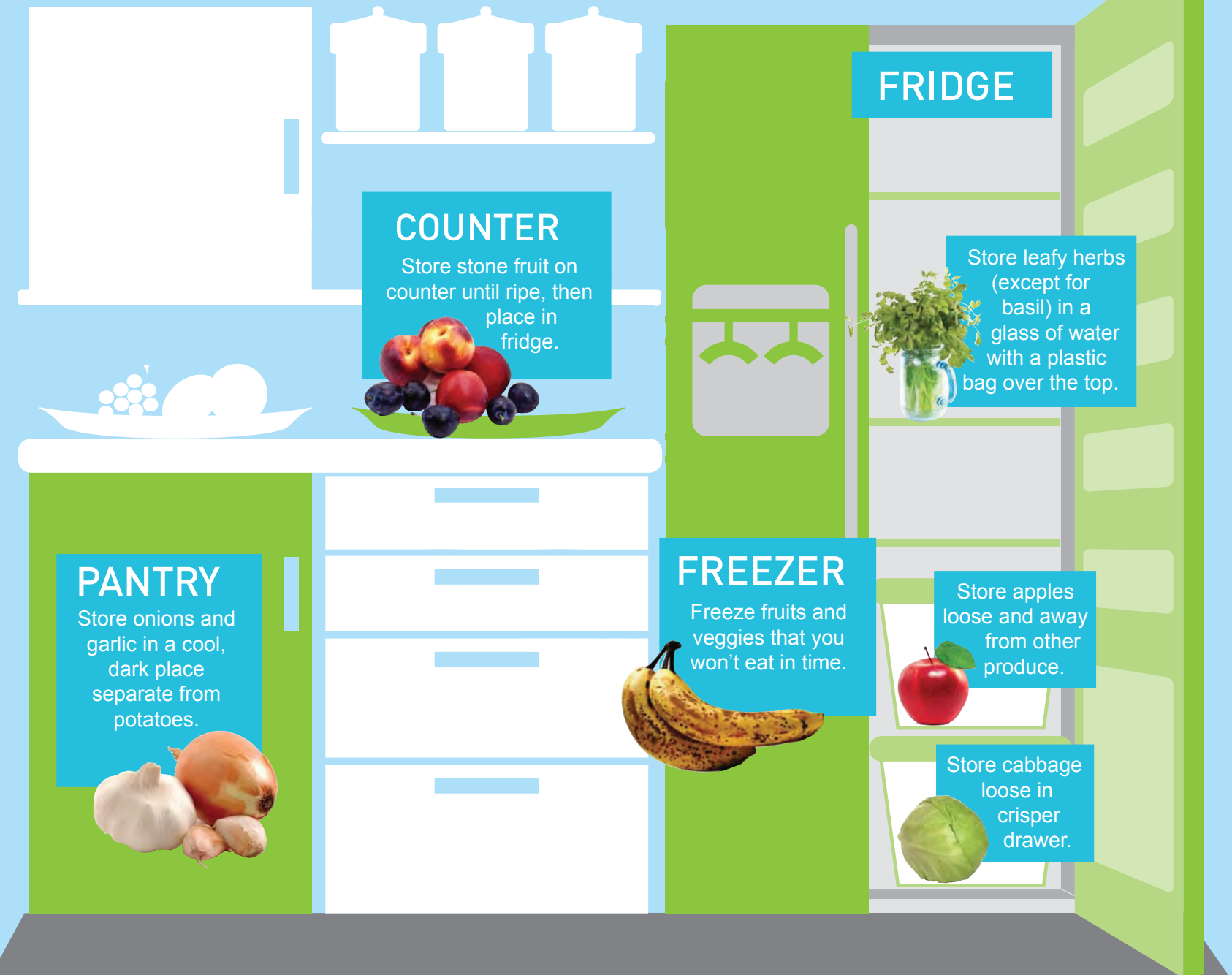
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## Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide

# KEEP IT FRESH!

Waste Less, Save More.



Fruits/Veggies	How to Store	Fruits/Veggies	How to Store	Fruits/Veggies	How to Store	Fruits/Veggies	How to Store
 <b>Apples</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Separate from other produce.	 <b>Brussel Sprouts</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store in a sealed container.	 <b>Grapes</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a sealed container. Wash just before eating to avoid mold.	 <b>Peppers</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Artichokes</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in plastic bag or sealed container.	 <b>Cabbage</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Green onions/scallions</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap in a damp towel or store upright in a glass of water.	 <b>Potatoes</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose or in a paper bag separate from onions.
 <b>Asparagus</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Remove bands and ties. Store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.	 <b>Cauliflower</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.	 <b>Herbs, leafy (cilantro, parsley)</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Trim stems and store upright in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the top.	 <b>Root veggies</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a sealed container with a dry towel.
 <b>Avocados</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Celery</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.	 <b>Herbs, woody (rosemary, sage)</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap in a damp towel and store in a sealed container.	 <b>Squash - summer</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap whole or sliced pieces in a damp towel.
 <b>Bananas</b>	<b>Counter.</b> Store away from other fruits and vegetables.	 <b>Cherries</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container. Wash just before eating to avoid mold.	 <b>Leafy greens (lettuce, kale)</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.	 <b>Squash - winter</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Basil</b>	<b>Counter.</b> Remove bands and ties. Trim stems and store in water with plastic bag over the top.	 <b>Citrus fruits</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Melons</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Stone fruits (peaches, plums)</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Beans (green, wax)</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a plastic bag or sealed container.	 <b>Corn</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store loose, keep in husks.	 <b>Mushrooms</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a paper bag.	 <b>Tomatillos</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a paper bag.
 <b>Berries</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a container, lid ajar and lined with a dry towel. Wash just before eating to avoid mold.	 <b>Cucumbers</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Okra</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Store in a paper bag.	 <b>Tomatoes</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store out of direct sunlight.
 <b>Bok Choy</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Remove bands and ties. Store in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.	 <b>Eggplant</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Onions</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose or in a mesh bag separate from potatoes.	 <b>Tropical fruit (kiwi, pineapple, mangoes)</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.
 <b>Broccoli, Broccolini</b>	<b>Fridge – crisper drawer.</b> Wrap in a damp paper towel.	 <b>Garlic</b>	<b>Cupboard/Pantry.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Pears</b>	<b>Ripen on counter, then store in fridge.</b> Store loose.	 <b>Zucchini</b>	<b>Fridge.</b> Wrap whole or sliced pieces in a damp towel.

For a complete database of food storage tips and their shelf lives, check out [StillTasty.com](http://StillTasty.com) or [EatByDate.com](http://EatByDate.com).



### Apart is better than together

Many fruits give off natural gases that cause nearby produce to ripen and spoil faster. Store fruits such as ripe bananas, avocados, apples and tomatoes away from other produce. Store veggies and fruit in separate fridge drawers.



### Spruce up limp greens

Immerse in ice water for 30 minutes or place upright in a glass of water for a few hours.



### Keep ready-to-eat snacks cool

Always refrigerate cut or peeled produce. Store in clear containers so you can see what's inside.