



Fall Food Safety Guidelines

Without a doubt fall harvest foods provide a range of health benefits. Farmer's markets and backyard gardens are a great way to get locally-grown, fresh fruit, vegetables, and other foods for you and your family. However, foodborne illness associated with fresh produce purchased at the farmers market or grown at someone's vegetable garden is a big concern especially during this time of year. **There are basic guidelines you can follow to ensure that your farm fresh food is safe.**

WHEN BUYING:

- Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged.
- When selecting fresh-cut produce - such as a half a watermelon or bagged salad greens - choose items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- Bag fresh fruits and vegetables separately from meat, poultry and seafood products.
- Only pasteurized milk should be served to children in your care. If purchasing milk at a farmer's market check to be sure it is not raw milk. Raw milk is not pasteurized and can harbor dangerous microorganisms, such as Salmonella, E. coli, Campylobacter, and Listeria, that can pose serious health risks to you and your family.
- Make sure that eggs are properly chilled at the market. FDA requires that untreated shell eggs must be stored and displayed at 45°F. Before buying eggs, open the carton and make sure that the eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked.

WHEN STORING:

- Store perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms) in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of **41° F or below**.
- **Refrigerate** all produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled.
- Fruit and vegetables stored at room temperature (onions, potatoes, tomatoes) should be kept in a cool, dry, pest-free, well-ventilated area separated from household chemicals.

WHEN PREPARING AND SERVING:

- **Wash your hands** for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce.
- **Cut away any damaged or bruised areas** on fresh fruits and vegetables. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.
- All produce should be **thoroughly washed** before eating. Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. *Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first.*
- Washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes is **not** recommended.
- If packaged produce indicates its contents have been pre-washed, you can use the produce without further washing.
- **Scrub** firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- **Drying produce** with a clean cloth towel or paper towel may further reduce bacteria that may be present.
- **Avoid cross-contamination** when preparing fruits and vegetables. Cross-contamination occurs when a clean work surface such as cutting board or utensil or uncontaminated food is contaminated by dirty work surfaces, utensils, hands or food. And again, be sure to wash your hands (as well as knife and cutting surface) before preparing any ready-to-eat foods such as salad, fresh fruit or a sandwich.

! Remember that young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for foodborne illness.



HAVE QUESTIONS?

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