

# Feed Your Body – Feed Your Soul

## Buy local. Eat local.

Did you know the average supermarket produce travels about 2,000 miles to your neighborhood grocery store? Farmers' market produce travels less than 50 miles, according to University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension experts who offer these buying and storing tips:

- **Go right home from the market.** Foods will decline in quality, and perishable foods such as meats and eggs can pose food safety problems if left sitting in your car. Bring along a cooler with ice if it will take more than an hour or so to get perishables into your refrigerator.
- **Store at room temperature:** bananas, melons, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and winter squash. Store them in a clean, dry, well-ventilated place, away from direct sunlight and away from areas where meat is prepared.
- **Ripen on the counter and then put in the refrigerator:** avocados, kiwifruit, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums. Do not keep produce in a sealed plastic bag on the countertop. This slows ripening and may increase off-odors and decay from the buildup of carbon dioxide and depletion of oxygen inside the bag.
- **Store in refrigerator most other fresh fruits and vegetables.** Use your refrigerator crisper drawer for whole produce. Store fruits in a separate refrigerator crisper drawer from vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas, which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits and affect their quality.
- **Refrigerate fruits and vegetables in perforated plastic bags.** This helps maintain moisture yet provide air flow. Make your own: use a sharp object to make several small holes in a food-grade plastic bag (about 20 holes per medium-size bag). Air-tight plastic bags can lead to the growth of mold or bacteria.
- **Wash your hands and produce thoroughly.** Wash produce before you use it, NOT when you bring it home. Fresh produce has a natural protective coating that helps keep in moisture and freshness. Washing produce before storage causes it to spoil faster.
- **Remove and discard outer leaves.** Rinse under clean, running water just before preparing or eating. Don't use soap or detergent. It can get into produce and make you sick. Rub briskly—scrubbing with a clean brush or hands—to clean the surface. Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel. Rinse produce even when the peel is removed—such as melons and citrus fruits. Once you have cut through the protective skin of fruits and vegetables, bacteria can enter. Refrigerate cut or peeled fruits and vegetables within 2 hours.
- **Take your own bags or baskets to the farmers' markets.** And be sure to wash them too. Bacteria can grow inside.

