



the
VEGAN RESET

**WEEK TWO: PRACTICAL
DAY TEN:
FRESH PRODUCE**



fresh produce

Whenever possible, try to opt for organically grown produce. The quality will be higher and you will get more nutrients while avoiding toxic pesticides. I know that organic foods aren't always readily available or affordable, so if you have to make a choice think of it this way: the thicker the skin, the less pesticides will have gotten to the fruit/vegetable itself. This means that while pineapples, avocados, papayas, mangoes etc. are ok to eat conventional, try to eat organic berries, greens and apples. Also check out the Clean Fifteen (OK to buy non-organic) and Dirty Dozen (prioritize organic when possible)

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The Clean Fifteen

1. Avocado
2. Sweet corn
3. Pineapples
4. Cabbage
5. Sweet peas
6. Onions
7. Asparagus
8. Mangoes
9. Papayas
10. Kiwi
11. Eggplant
12. Honeydew melon
13. Grapefruit
14. Cantaloupe
15. Cauliflower

The Dirty Dozen

1. Strawberries
2. Apples
3. Nectarines
4. Peaches
5. Celery
6. Grapes
7. Cherries
8. Spinach
9. Tomatoes
10. Sweet bell peppers
11. Cherry tomatoes
12. Cucumbers

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RIPE vs. UNRIPE fruit

Why ripe?

Ripe fruit is sweeter and its flavor is much fuller. It also contains more antioxidants and is easier to digest. You'll be able to absorb a lot more of its nutrients when eating it ripe.

How can you tell if it's ripe?

You'll be able to tell if a fruit is ripe by looking at it, smelling it and/or touching it. Most fruits will turn from green (because of their chlorophyll) to a brighter color like orange, yellow or red and won't have a distinct smell unless they're ripe. Fruits like mangoes and peaches should be soft, but not too soft when you touch them. The more intense the color, the better. Here are a few more examples:

Strawberries: if they are white around the stem, that means that they were picked too early and aren't ripe yet. The leaves should be dark green, but not dried out.

Cherries: the stems should still be attached and the cherries should be dark red and firm. If they're too soft, they're past their prime.

Cantaloupe: you should be able to press into it slightly. If it's too hard, it's not ripe yet. It should also smell very sweet.

Pineapple: unripe pineapples have no scent, ripe pineapples smell sweet and overripe pineapples smell vinegary. The color should be orange/yellow (no longer green), the leaves should be dark green and you should be able to easily remove the top by twisting it. It should also be quite heavy (which means it's juicier).

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Persimmons: they may look ripe when you get them, but they can take up to 2, 3 or even 4 weeks to be ready to eat. They should be very soft to the touch and have an almost pudding like consistency. If they're unripe, they're hard and chalky and won't taste good at all.

Avocados: they should be soft to the touch and if you remove the dry stem at the bottom, the color should be a yellowish green. If it's brown, it's already overripe.

Oranges: their skin should look bright and firm. If they're too pale they're not ripe yet and when the skin looks "leathery", they're overripe.

Bananas: Bananas are ripe when they're covered in spots and smell sweet. Most people eat them when they're still green, but that's not ideal. You should only really eat them when they're ripe.

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Something you may not be familiar with is the concept of “fruit combining” or “fruit and veggie” combining. Does it really matter which foods we combine with each other? The answer isn’t quite as simple. Over the past few years, the conclusion I’ve come to is that how well you tolerate certain combinations depends on how clean your diet is overall. Meaning that if you’re used to eating junk food, whether or not you combine an acid with a sweet fruit won’t really matter. It’s not that your body doesn’t know the difference, but rather that it’s become somewhat numb because of all the processed foods it’s been digesting. Here’s a concrete example: before switching to a healthy plant-based diet, I was used to eating very processed and often extremely oily foods. After a few months of making healthy home cooked meals, I was invited to a work dinner at a restaurant. They had a lot vegan, yet highly processed and fatty dishes. I decided to indulge in all the delicious food. When I went home that night, I felt incredibly sick. Yet, just months before I could have eaten the same thing and I would have been fine. What happened? My body became used to healthier foods and therefore more sensitive to processed foods. At this point in time, fruit combining is something to be aware of, but not necessarily a strict law to abide by depending on where you are in your journey. Try a few different combinations and see whether they feel good to you or not. Depending on how long they take to digest, not all fruits combine well with each other. Here's a checklist:

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Melons (honeydew, cantaloupe, watermelon...) and juices are best consumed first and by themselves (in the case of melons, it is also OK to combine them with acid fruits)

Sweet fruits (bananas, pears, figs, persimmons, dates...) go well with other sweet fruits, sub-acid fruits and tender and leafy green vegetables like lettuce, celery and cucumbers.

Sub-acid fruits (mangoes, blueberries, cherries, peaches...) go well with other sub-acid fruits, sweet fruits, acid fruits and greens.

Acid fruits (oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, tomatoes, pineapple, kiwi...) go well with other acid fruits, sub-acid fruits, melons, all greens and raw fats like nuts, seeds and avocado.

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Store your vegetables (except for root vegetables) the fridge. If you want your leafy greens to stay fresh longer, store them in biodegradable produce bags and remove as much air as possible. Bell peppers can be stored on the countertop or in the fridge (I personally prefer storing them at room temperature).

Most fruit should be kept outside of the fridge so it can ripen properly and develop its full flavors. Here are a few specifics and exceptions:

Berries: Berries should always be kept in fridge in order to remain fresh for as long as possible. It's also best to not wrap them in plastic or paper and to let them be surrounded by air so they don't get moldy as quickly.

Citrus: Citrus (oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruits) can be stored both on the countertop and in the fridge. The latter will keep it fresh longer.

Papaya: Leave papayas on the countertop until they're perfectly ripe and then start refrigerating them to keep them from going bad too fast.

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Pineapple: Pineapples should be stored outside of the fridge and here's a trick: store them upside down. Have you ever noticed how the bottom part is much sweeter than the top part? If you store them upside down while ripening, the fruit sugars can "sink" to the top and the sweetness will be more even.

Tomatoes: Never ever refrigerate your tomatoes! Refrigerating them keeps them from ripening and changes their texture and taste.

Avocado: Avocados do not like the cold, so make sure you store them at room temperature. If you're making guacamole and want to store it in the fridge without it turning brown, a trick is to add water on top and to remove it once you take it out of the fridge.

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You can easily freeze fresh produce thereby making sure you don't waste any food and always have some at hand for smoothies and quick meals. Freeze fruit when it's at its ripest and vegetables when they're still fresh.

FRUIT

Fruit can simply be cut into chunks and frozen in a ziplock bag or reusable container.

Frozen bananas are great in smoothies or to make banana ice cream. Here's how to freeze them:

1. Make sure your bananas are super ripe (as shown on the picture)
2. Peel them.
3. Put them in a ziplock bag (not as eco friendly, but there are reusable ones) or a reusable container. I prefer to leave them whole instead of breaking or cutting them into smaller pieces as they are very easy to break once they are frozen (and you won't end up with a giant block of frozen banana pieces). Make sure the bag or container is closed as airtight as possible and put them in the freezer. Leave them in the freezer for at least a few hours, if possible longer.

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JUICE

For those of you who have a juicer or who sometimes buy fresh juice, you can freeze any leftover juice in an ice cube tray. The juice cubes are the perfect refreshment on a summer day.

VEGETABLES

Vegetables and legumes like beans, peas, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, asparagus and cauliflower should be blanched before being frozen. By blanching those veggies, you can avoid dull colors and off textures and flavors.

To blanch them, submerge them in boiling water for a couple of minutes and then in ice water to stop the cooking process. Dry them with a towel and place them on a tray lined with baking paper. Put them in the freezer for at least a few hours and then move them to a reusable container in the freezer (to take up less space).

Leafy greens like chard, kale and spinach don't necessarily have to be blanched, but doing so will help reduce the space needed in the freezer, so the choice is yours. Other veggies like squash and potatoes do not need to be blanched before being frozen.

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A question that I get a lot is whether it's better to blend or juice your fruits and vegetables. Both smoothies and juices have their benefits and there is no clear cut answer to this, but here are a few factors that come into play when deciding on which one to go for:

- Smoothies contain fiber which means that it takes longer to digest them and they will keep you full for longer. You also need less produce, so you'll end up saving money.
- When you juice fruits and vegetables, you remove all the fiber, thereby causing the fruit sugar to enter your blood stream much more quickly. This can be a good thing if you want energy quickly, but may cause you to get hungry again sooner. The greener the juice, the less of a fruit sugar rush you will feel.

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Another thing to consider is the juicing method. Nowadays, you can get relatively cheap juicers (mostly centrifuges) at any larger store, but a juicer may be the one thing you really want to invest in if you're planning on making juices a part of your daily habits. The cheaper juicers don't usually retain many of the nutrients, so you're better off just eating the fruits, vegetables themselves or making a smoothie as you'll end up wasting a lot of money on produce while not getting much in return. The best juices are either "cold pressed" or made using a slow juicer.

BOTTOM LINE: After weighing the pros and cons of juicing vs blending, I now make mostly smoothies at home, but when I'm looking for a more cleansing or energizing effect, I'll make (mostly) green juice.

When I'm out, I might go to a Juice bar and get either a cold-pressed juice or a smoothie, depending on my mood and appetite. If I want quick energy (for instance as a coffee replacer), I'll go for a juice or a small smoothie. To replace a meal, I'll opt for a large smoothie.