



live life well.



TIP OF THE WEEK



Q&As about Fresh Produce

Q What is "organic produce"?

A Organic produce is grown without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation.

Before a product can be labeled "organic," a **government-approved certifier** inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture's organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it reaches the supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too.

Q What is ethylene gas - and how does it affect produce?

A Some fruits and vegetables - like bananas - **naturally produce ethylene gas** when they ripen. Oftentimes, such fruits and vegetables are harvested in the unripened state to preserve firmness and for long shelf life; they are later exposed to ethylene gas to induce ripening.

Q What does the "use-by" date mean on a package of fresh produce?

A A "Best-If-Used-By- (or Before)" date is the last date recommended for peak quality as determined by the manufacturer of the product.

Q Why are wax coatings used on fruits and vegetables?

A Many vegetables and fruits make their own natural waxy coating. After harvest, fresh produce may be washed to clean off dirt and soil - but such washing also removes the natural wax. Therefore, waxes are applied to some produce to replace the natural waxes that are lost.

Wax coatings help retain moisture to maintain quality from farm to table including:

- when produce is **shipped** from farm to market
- while it is **in the stores and restaurants**
- once it is **in the home**

Waxes also help inhibit mold growth, protect produce from bruising, prevent other physical damage and disease, and enhance appearance.

Q How are waxes applied?

A Waxes are used only in tiny amounts to provide a microscopic coating surrounding the entire product. Each piece of waxed produce has **only a drop or two** of wax.

Coatings used on fruits and vegetables **must meet FDA food additive regulations** for safety. Produce shippers and supermarkets in the United States are required by federal law to label fresh fruits and vegetables that have been waxed so you will know whether the produce you buy is coated. Watch for signs that say: "Coated with food-grade vegetable-, petroleum-, beeswax-, or shellac-based wax or resin, to maintain freshness."

