

Wash fruits and vegetables under clean, running water in a clean sink. Fresh fruits and vegetables should not be soaked in water. Do not use detergents, soaps or bleach to wash produce. These products may change the flavor and could be poisonous.

If the fruits and vegetables are firm (such as potatoes or melons), scrub them with a clean, sanitized fruit/vegetable brush. For soft fruits and vegetables (tomatoes), gently rub them with your hands to loosen the dirt. Also remove the outer leaves of lettuce and cabbage before washing them.

To wash berries, parsley and greens, put them in a clean colander and spray them with a kitchen sink sprayer. Or, gently turn the produce as you hold it under running water. Be sure to turn and gently shake the colander as you wash the produce.

Fresh produce harvested from a home garden can be rinsed with clean, running water before storage to remove excess dirt and debris. However, dry these fruits and vegetables thoroughly before storing them, and wash them properly before preparing them.

Produce washes

On the market today are several products called produce washes. These products usually include substances such as phosphates, baking soda or citric acid. Some of these products may help remove additional dirt, pesticides and bacteria from fruits and vegetables. However, these products are expensive and they are not recommended by any federal agency to clean fresh produce.

Fruit and vegetable waxes

Some fruits and vegetables may have waxy coatings to keep them fresh, to protect them from bruising and to prevent the growth of mold. Waxes also make fruits and vegetables more attractive. These waxes are safe to eat.

Washing fresh produce with water may not remove the wax, but soap should not be used to wash fresh produce. If you prefer, you can remove the waxed skin before eating the fruit, or you can buy unwaxed produce.

Remember: To help prevent foodborne illness, store your fruits and vegetables properly and wash them thoroughly.

Tri-State Fruit and Vegetable Safety Consortium
<http://fruitandvegetablesafety.tamu.edu>

This publication was sponsored by a grant from the Initiative for Future Agriculture Food Systems, a program of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, which is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-CSREES-IFAFS Grant # 00-52102-9637).

Produced by Agricultural Communications,
The Texas A&M University System
Extension publications can be found on the Web at:
<http://tcebookstore.org>
Visit Texas Cooperative Extension at:
<http://texasextension.tamu.edu>

Educational programs of Texas Cooperative Extension are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Chester P. Fehlis, Director, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System.

New