

Picking the Best Fresh Produce

If you're heading out to pick up some of the seasons finest produce, take a moment to review these tips for picking the best of the bunch.

When it comes to choosing vegetables, remember the following tips:

- Tomatoes should be smooth, somewhat firm and have a slight aroma.
- Choose asparagus that is firm, bright green in color and with tight tips.
- The best broccoli has compact clusters of tightly closed, dark green florets. Avoid heads with yellow florets or thick, woody stems.
- Beets should be smooth skinned and leaves should be dark green.
- Summer squash should be firm with smooth skin and should feel heavy for its size.
- Pick potatoes that are firm and smooth with no wrinkles, sprouts, cracks, bruises, decay or bitter green areas.

Remember these tips for choosing the freshest fruits:

- Choose blueberries that are plump and have a light-grayish coating on the surface.
- For raspberries or blackberries, pick firm, plump, well-shaped berries. If they are soft or discolored, they are overripe. Avoid containers that look stained from overripe berries.
- Honeydew should have a waxy white to cream colored rind and barely tinged green.
- Cantaloupes should have pronounced netting, the stem area should be soft to the touch and the melon should smell sweet.
- Peaches should be slightly soft and smell sweet.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are lower in calories and high in nutritional content. Continue to substitute them daily for the high calorie/high fat/high sugar/no real nutritional value foods and soft drinks. By spreading them out during the day, it is easy to get the recommended minimum combination of 5 servings a day.