This guide is designed to help you identify and select the best fruits and vegetables at your store or market. My goal is to help you enjoy foods more by choosing the most flavorful and nutritious products from the store.

This guide is NOT meant to cover every fruit and vegetable found in the world, that’s just not possible. Nor is this guide meant to be botanically correct, items are grouped by their kitchen usage, not scientific classification. The items described will be the ones typical to my market on the east coast of the United States.

Please keep in mind, also, that there are many different varieties of each example. I mean to speak in the most general terms to help you make the best educated decision when purchasing.

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**Fruit**

Citrus Fruit, Vine Fruit, Melons, Tree Fruit, Stone Fruit, Tropicals

**Citrus Fruit** – Sectioned, juicy flesh with thick rind of bitter white pith and thin colored skin, internal seeds, grow on trees. (oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit)

**Vine Fruit** grow from a single vine or from a shrub, have juicy flesh and are most delicate with paper thin skins. (grapes, berries)

**Melons** have a tough, smooth or netted outer skin, juicy flesh and hard rind (watermelon)

**Tree Fruit** grow from hard-wood trees and have a hard flesh protecting internal seeds. (apples, pears)

**Stone Fruit** have a single internal seed surrounded by soft, juicy flesh and thin colored skin. (peaches, plums, nectarines)

**Tropicals** – Fruits grown in a tropical, or sub-tropical environment. (pineapples, bananas, mangos, papayas)

**Vegetables**

Cabbages, Seed-Vegetables, Gourds/Squashes, Greens, Fungi, Onions, Roots

**Cabbages** – overlapping leaves to form a tight head (cauliflower, Brussels sprouts)

**Seed-Vegetables** – technically fruits or pods with internal seeds and delicate flesh (tomatoes)

**Gourds/Squashes** – tough outer skin, tough flesh and internal seed cavity (squash)

**Greens** - leafy part of a vegetable eaten raw for salads, or cooked. (lettuces, kale)

**Fungi** – mushrooms

**Onions** – paper thin skin protects internal layers, fiberous root structure

**Roots** – tuber vegetables whose edible part grows beneath the ground.

Vegetables contain much less sugar, and considerably more starch and fiber than most fruits, thus are usually cooked.
**Apples**
Tree Fruit

Appearance: Baseball sized, heart shaped fruit with top stem and smooth skin
Color: Red, green, yellow, pink
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Sweet to sour

- The old saying “One bad apple spoils the whole bunch” is true, as bruised apples emit ethylene gas that hastens spoilage of adjacent fruits.
- The stem should be firmly attached to the apple.
- Dry or missing stems are signs of an apple in decay.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, sauces, baked goods
Select: Firm, hard to the touch with pliable stem end
Avoid: Brown spots, bruises, soft spots, or dry or missing stems
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 2 months

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**Apricots**
Stone Fruit

Appearance: Small, round, golf ball sized fruit with smooth skin
Color: Yellow to bright orange
Texture: Very delicate and fragile
Flavor: Sweet and very juicy

They are a very delicate fruit that doesn't travel well and has a short season, so look quickly for those that are round in shape and have a firm, tight skin without wrinkles or soft spots.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, sauces for game or spicy foods, baked goods
Select: Firm, tight skin and bright color
Avoid: Wrinkled skin, dryness, or green and mushy fruit
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 1 week
Artichokes
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Looks like a pine cone or small pineapple
Color: Green
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Mild

Use: Grilled, steamed, baked, roasted, with hollandaise sauce
Select: Tight, solid green, compact heads that feel heavy
Avoid: Wilted leaves, loosely packed heads, dryness or brown root end
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 3 weeks

Arugula
Salad Greens

Leaves: Small, oblong with central rib
Color: Green with white rib
Texture: Soft
Flavor: Bitter, spicy

- A member of the cabbage family, sold as individual leaves

Use: Sparingly in salads, in soup, or sautéed like spinach
Select: Individual leaves with bright white rib and deep green color
Avoid: Wilted leaves, brown spots at stem
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 5 days

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Asparagus
Vegetable

Appearance: Long, pencil shape with floret top
Color: Green
Texture: Stalky
Flavor: Mild

Use: Salads, steamed, grilled, roasted, braised, pureed for soup
Select: Firm spears with tightly closed tips and bright color
Avoid: Mushy tips, pliable, soft stalks, gray color
Storage: refrigerated, standing in a glass with ½ inch of water
Life: 1 week

Avocados
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Pear-shaped and sized with rough skin
Color: Dark green to black
Texture: Creamy
Flavor: Mild

Use: Raw in salads, pureed for sauces, diced for salsa, sliced for sandwiches.
Select: Firm avocados that yield slightly to the touch
Avoid: Overly soft, blemished, or cut fruit
Storage: Ripen at room temperature, then refrigerate
Life: 2 weeks
**Bananas**  
Tropical Fruit

Appearance: Bunch of long, finger-shaped fruit with smooth skin  
Color: Yellow or green when immature  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Sticky, sweet and starchy

- Bananas ripen after being harvested and continue to do so until most of the starches in the banana turn to sugar.  
- You can consider purchasing bananas of varying degrees of green to eat as they ripen.  
- Avoid bananas with mold at the stem, or a grayish color that would indicate damage due to cold temperatures.  
- To store bananas at home, separate all the bananas from each other and store in a paper bag in a dark, cool place.

Use: Eaten raw, in cereals, dried, in baked goods, or tropical cuisines  
Select: Larger bunches that are slightly green  
Avoid: Soft bananas with bruises or excessive black spots  
Storage: At room temperature in a paper bag in darkness  
Life: 1 week

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**Beets**  
Root

Appearance: Tennis ball sized bulbous tubers with irregular skin and root end  
Color: Red to purple  
Texture: Hard and starchy  
Flavor: Bitter and acidic

Use: Pureed for soup, steamed, poached, baked, as a side dish  
Select: Small to medium sized firm beets with smooth, moist skins  
Avoid: Growth from the root end, soft texture, overly dry skin  
Storage: Room temperature  
Life: 3 weeks

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Boston and Bibb Lettuces

Salad Greens

Leaves: Soft, pliable,
Color: Pale green
Texture: Soft, buttery
Flavor: Mild

- Soft-ball sized, compact heads whose leaves make cups when separated.

Use: Salads, plate liner, composed salad base
Select: Firm heads of green color
Avoid: Burnt leaf edges, leaves falling off, hollow center of head
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 1 week

Blackberries

Vine Fruit

Appearance: A Marble sized berry that looks like bunches of tiny grapes
Color: Deep purple to black
Texture: Soft and delicate
Flavor: Sweet

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, sauces for game or spicy foods, tarts and baked goods
Select: A deep, even color berry that is firm
Avoid: Mushy fruit or juice stains in the container
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 5 days
**Blueberries**  
*Vine Fruit*

Appearance: Pea to pebble-sized individual berries  
Color: Deep blue to purple  
Texture: Soft and delicate  
Flavor: Sweet

- Blueberries should bounce off the floor or table top if dropped.  
- Blueberries in a container should roll around like peas. If they are stuck together, that means some have decayed, sticking to many others.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, sauces for game or spicy foods, baked goods  
Select: A deep even color berry that is plump and firm  
Avoid: Soft berries or white spots that would indicate mold, or berries that are stuck together with juice stains in the container  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 1 week

**Bok Choy**  
*Cooked Greens*

Appearance: Oblong leaves with central rib  
Color: Green to dark green with white rib  
Texture: Tender  
Flavor: Rich and chewy

- Bok choy has a mild flavor like leaf lettuce or romaine and can be eaten in salads, but is most often used in stir fry or in soups.  
- Pickled and fermented bok choy is a Korean dish named kim chee.

Use: Salads, stir-fry, soups, braising, sauté’  
Select: tight heads with bright white stalks and dark green leaves  
Avoid: wilted leaves, dark brown spots, or loosely packed heads  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week
**Broccoli**  
*Cabbages*

Appearance: Tree-like central stalk grows leaves, topped by florets  
Color: Green  
Texture: woody stalk and tender florets  
Flavor: Mild

- Broccoli leaves are not eaten because of their poor texture and bitterness.  
- Purchase broccoli with whole stalks still attached.  
- Avoid pre-cut broccoli florets, as they will dry out quickly.

Use: Blanched in salads, steamed, stir-fry, baked in sauce  
Select: Tight, dark green floret clusters  
Avoid: Yellow flowers or bendable stalks  
Storage: Fresh cut off the stem end, in a glass of water  
Life: 2 weeks

**Brussels Sprouts**  
*Cabbages*

Appearance: They look like little baby cabbages  
Color: Green  
Texture: Hard and compact  
Flavor: Slightly bitter and nutty

Use: steamed or roasted with game, ham, duck  
Select: small, firm, compact sprouts, bright green, tight heads  
Avoid: blemishes, dark spots, wilted leaves, dry root ends  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 2 weeks
Green and Red Cabbage
Cabbages

Appearance: Medium melon sized round heads
Color: Green or red with white ribs and stem interior
Texture: Crisp
Flavor: Mild to bitter (green is mild, red bitter)

Use: Shredded for cole slaw, in salads, soups, stews, stir-fry, or poached leaves to wrap around meat fillings.
Select: Firm, heavy, tightly packed heads
Avoid: Loose leaves, dry cores, wilted brown leaf ends
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 3 weeks

Carrots
Roots

Appearance: Long, pencil shape with top greenery
Color: Orange root with green tops
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Sweet and mild

Use: Salads, steamed, grilled, roasted, braised, pureed for soup, in baked goods
Select: Bright orange color, crisp, stiff, with smooth skins.
Avoid: Hairy carrots that are bendable or soft
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 3 weeks
**Cauliflower**

Cabbages

Appearance: Volleyball sized head of florets surrounded by leaves  
Color: White florets and green leaves  
Texture: Hearty and firm  
Flavor: Sour

- The most popular of cabbages, one head grows from each stalk, surrounded by dark green leaves

Use: steamed, blanching, stir fry, baked in sauce  
Select: heavy, compact, bright white heads with crisp, green leaves attached  
Avoid: yellow color or spreading florets  
Storage: Refrigeration in a plastic bag  
Life: 3 weeks

**Celery**

Vegetable

Appearance: Large bunch of long, stick shaped stalks  
Color: Light green  
Texture: Stringy, stalky  
Flavor: Mild

Use: Salads, steamed, braised, blanched as crudite  
Select: Crisp stalks that will not bend with true green color  
Avoid: Soft, bendable stalks and dryness at root end  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks
**Swiss Chard**
Salad or Cooked Greens

Appearance: Glossy wrinkled leaves with heavy central stem
Color: Green leaves, red stem
Texture: Hearty and chewy
Flavor: Tart, bitter

Use: Steamed, sautéed, soups, in cream sauce. Pairs well with fruit
Select: Crisp, curly leaves of dark green color and bright red stalk
Avoid: Unblemished ribs, curled leaf edges, any white or gray color
Storage: Air circulation
Life: 1 week

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**Cherries**
Vine Fruit

Appearance: Marble sized individual fruit with central pit and long stem
Color: Yellow to red to nearly black
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Very sour

- There are two types of cherry, sweet cherries and sour cherries.
- Bing cherries are the most popular and widely available.
- Neither type of cherries will ripen further after harvest.
- A dried stem or one that is easily removed indicates older fruit.
  Once the stem is removed, the cherry loses quality quickly.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, sauces for game or spicy foods, baked goods
Select: Firm, plump berries that seem heavy for their size and have stem attached
Avoid: Missing stems, wrinkled skin, bruises and blemishes
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 2 weeks

**Corn**
(a grain, technically)

Appearance: Long cylinder with outer skin and silk strands
Color: Green leaves and white or yellow seeds
Texture: Hard, woody
Flavor: Mild and sweet

Use: Roasted, grilled, or steamed with husks left on. All kitchen applications when the kernels are shucked from the cob
Select: Firm, small kernels that burst when pressed
Avoid: Brownish silks, mold or decay, insect infestation, soft, moist, discolored kernels
Storage: Room temperature. Refrigeration will turn sugars back to starches
Life: 1 week

**Cranberries**
(Vine Fruit)

Appearance: Pea to grape sized individual berries
Color: Lipstick red with white and beige
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Very sour

- Color is NOT an indicator of ripeness with cranberries.
- Cranberries cannot be eaten raw, they’re horribly sour.
- Whether making sauces, using in breads or relishes, always examine each of the berries for foreign sticks, rocks, or rotten berries from the swamps they’re cultivated in.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, sauces for game or spicy foods, baked goods
Select: A hard, plump and firm berry is best.
Avoid: Soft berries or juice stains in the container
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 3 weeks
**Cucumbers**

**Vegetable**

Appearance: Spear shaped cylindrical vegetable 1-2” in diameter  
Color: Green with white or yellow  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Mild to bitter

- Pickling cucumbers are smaller and bitter; cornichon, dill, gherkin.  
- Slicing cucumbers are juicy and mild: hot-house, common green

Use: Salads, Tzatziki sauce, pickling, juicing  
Select: Firm but not hard texture, bright color  
Avoid: Pliant, soft, limp cucumbers with brown or soft spots. Avoid waxed cucumbers, or peel them before eating.  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 2 weeks

**Curly Endive**

**Salad Greens**

Leaves: Pointed, irregular, sturdy  
Color: Dark green  
Texture: Soft but sharp  
Flavor: Bitter

- Also called frisee or chicory

Use: Salads to add flavor and texture, serve with cheeses, palate cleanser  
Select: Deep, dark leaves  
Avoid: Wilted leaves, white spots, loosely packed head  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 5 days
**Daikon**  
*Root*

Appearance: Long, cylinder like a zucchini  
Color: White with top greenery  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Mild to peppery  

Use: Salads, steamed, grilled, roasted, braised, pureed for soup, in baked goods  
Select: Clean, white color, crisp, stiff, with smooth skins.  
Avoid: Hairy daikon that are bendable or soft  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks

**Dandelion**  
*Salad Greens*

Leaves: Long, narrow, saw-blade looking  
Color: Dark green  
Texture: Stalky and crisp  
Flavor: Bitter  

- A wild weed throughout most of the U.S.

Use: Sparingly in salads, as garnish, cooked as a vegetable  
Select: Young, smaller leaves. Deep green with bright white pronounced rib  
Avoid: Larger older leaves, wilted leaves  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks
**Dates**
Stone Fruit

Appearance: Oval shaped 2 inches long with thin, translucent skin
Color: Dark brown or golden raisin
Texture: Sticky and soft
Flavor: Sweet and juicy

- Dates have been around since ancient times.
- A ripe and fresh date will look like it’s been dried because of the loose, wrinkled skin, but this is preferable.

Use: Eaten raw, in cereals, dried, in baked goods, or tropical cuisines
Select: Wrinkled, shiny and moist dates
Avoid: Dry dates with a white film, indicator of mold
Storage: At room temperature in a covered container
Life: 1 week

**Eggplant**
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Oblong, football sized, smooth skin, woody stalk
Color: Many varieties, but mostly deep purple to black
Texture: Dense and chewy
Flavor: Bitter when raw, but absorbs flavors well

- There are hundreds of varieties of eggplant, from the deep purple western version to myriad Asian purple and green varieties.

Use: Baked, breaded and fried, sautéed, grilled, sauteed
Select: Heavy eggplants with a smooth shiny skin
Avoid: Blemished or wrinkled skin or dried top stalk
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 1 week
**Endive**  
Salad Greens

Leaves: Long, cup shaped  
Color: Yellow to white  
Texture: stiff, crisp  
Flavor: Bitter

- Because of its structure, one of very few lettuces that can be cooked or grilled

Use: Appetizer cup, composed salads, braised or grilled  
Select: Bright yellow leaf tips and sturdy white base  
Avoid: Wilted leaf tips or white color  
Storage: Refrigeration in a plastic bag  
Life: 2 weeks

**Escarole**  
Salad Greens

Leaves: Thick, sharp, irregular  
Color: Dark green  
Texture: Sharp, pointy, firm and crisp  
Flavor: Bitter

- Sometimes called broadleaf endive  
- Looks like Curly Endive’s bigger brother

Use: Salads to add bitter flavor, braised or used like spinach in soups  
Select: Deep green outer leaves, paler yellow inner leaves  
Avoid: Loosely packed heads, wilted leaves, decaying root end  
Storage: Refrigeration in a plastic bag  
Life: 2 weeks
**Fennel**

**Onion**

Appearance: Large bulb vegetable with feathery leaves  
Color: White bulb, green leaves  
Texture: Hard and stringy  
Flavor: Licorice

Use: Steamed, grilled, poached, sautéed, in soups or sauces  
Select: Large, bright white bulbs with fragrant, soft leaves  
Avoid: Dried bulbs that begin to spread and open, dried leaves or brown color  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks

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**Garlic**

**Onion**

Appearance: Golf ball sized group of cloves with paper-thin outer skin  
Color: White  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Pungent and bitter

Use: All kitchen applications, for flavoring sauces, marinades, sautéed items  
Select: Dry, tightly held cloves with smooth, dry skins  
Avoid: Green sprouts or mold on the stem end  
Storage: Room temperature  
Life: 2 weeks
**Grapefruit**  
*Citrus Fruit*

Appearance: Softball sized with slightly pocked skin  
Color: Yellow or orange skin with pink or white flesh  
Texture: Soft  
Flavor: Sweet and tart

- Grapefruit are either white fleshed or pink fleshed.  
- White grapefruits are generally more tart and pink grapefruits sweeter.  
- The zest should give strong aroma when scratched with a finger nail.  
- If a display is cut in half, the segments should be full and moist, no gaps or dryness. The center of the cut grapefruit should full. Hollow grapefruit are degrading.

Use: Sectioned and eaten raw or in fruit salads, topped with sugar and broiled  
Select: Firm, but not hard fruit that are heavy for their size with bright color and clean zest aroma.  
Avoid: Soft fruit with blemishes, bruises or moist spots  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 3 weeks

**Grapes**  
*Vine Fruit*

Appearance: Marble sized round berries  
Color: Green to red to black  
Texture: Soft and delicate  
Flavor: Sweet

- Grapes grown for wine and those grown to eat are two different types of grapes.  
- Grapes are classified as white grapes or black grapes. White grapes are actually green, and black grapes are really red.  
- The white varieties are generally more bland than the black ones.  
- White grapes usually have a thinner skin and a tougher flesh.

- The easiest way to tell if a grape is good is to eat one when nobody is looking.

Use: Fruit salads, juice, jams, jellies, compotes, “Veronique” preparations  
Select: Full, plump, tight groups of grapes that are firmly attached to the stem  
Avoid: Grapes that fall easily from the stem, soft wrinkled grapes, or white mold at the stem  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 2 weeks
**Iceberg Lettuce**
Salad Greens

Leaves: Soft at edges, crisp at the stalk
Color: Green to white
Texture: Crisp
Flavor: Bland

- The size of a playground ball, smaller than a basketball, the most widely used lettuce

Use: Salads, shredded for garnish, platter liner
Select: Tight, compact heads that are heavy for their size
Avoid: Brown, soft spots, or decayed root ends
Storage: Refrigeration wrapped in plastic bag
Life: 2 weeks

**Jicama**
Root

Appearance: Irregularly round, baseball sized tuber
Color: White to beige
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Sweet

Use: Salads, salsa, steamed, stir-fry
Select: Heavy, firm vegetables. Size does not indicate tenderness or maturity
Avoid: Soft, light vegetables with brown or soft spots
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 3 weeks
**Kale**
Cooked Greens

Appearance: Large, course, ruffled leaves
Color: Dark gray-ish green
Texture: Sharp and firm
Flavor: Bitter and chalky

- Some kale is edible, some is used for decoration and garnish.

Use: Simmered, poached, stuffed, used in soups or for garnish or platter liner
Select: Tight, sharp leaves with deep green/gray color
Avoid: Wilted, bendable leaves, brown spots or curled leaf edges
Storage: Refrigeration in a plastic bag
Life: 3 weeks

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**Kiwis**
Tropical Fruit

Appearance: Egg sized fruit with fuzzy outer skin
Color: Brown skin with lime green flesh
Texture: Firm
Flavor: Sweet and mild

- The thin, fuzzy brown skin and lime-green flesh kiwi makes it unique among fruits.
- Kiwi will not continue to ripen, but will soften at room temperature.
- Choose kiwi whose fuzz stays attached to the skin and does not rub off.
- Kiwi are generally not cooked because they immediately fall apart.

Use: Cut or diced for salads, used as garnish or decoration on baked goods
Select: Fruit that yields to pressure, but not too hard or soft
Avoid: Dry or dusty stem ends, bruised or blemished skin, and soft spots
Storage: Refrigeration allowing air circulation
Life: 1 week
**Kumquats**

*Citrus Fruit*

Appearance: Golf ball sized, football shaped  
Color: Yellow or orange  
Texture: Soft  
Flavor: Sour and tart

Kumquats can be eaten whole, but because of their bitterness are usually combined with other fruits for a salad, but mostly used in jams and preserves that can be further sweetened.

Use: Jams and preserves, in fruit salads  
Select: A consistent color fruit that yields and recoils when pressed.  
Avoid: Soft fruit with blemishes, or that is still green near the stem  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 3 weeks

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**Leaf Lettuce**

*Salad Greens*

Leaves: Elongated with ruffled edges  
Color: Bright red or deep green  
Texture: Soft  
Flavor: Mild

- Leaf lettuce grows in bunches, rather than on a “head”.

Use: Salads, Sandwiches, tray liner  
Select: Nicely shaped leaves, true deep color, tight bunches  
Avoid: Wilted leaves, loose head, bruises, breaks or brown spots  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week

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Leeks
Onion

Appearance: Long, cylindrical plant with root end and flat leaves
Color: White root end with green leaves
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Strong, but more mild than onions

Use: Baked, braised, grilled, in stocks, soups, sauces
Select: Firm, green leaves with stiff roots and stems
Avoid: Dry leaves, brown or soft spots, overly dry root ends
Storage: Room temperature
Life: 1 week

Lemons
Citrus Fruit

Appearance: Oval shaped fruit the size of a handball with slightly pocked skin
Color: Yellow skin with white flesh
Texture: Firm
Flavor: Sour

- The bright yellow, oval-shaped fruit is the most widely used.
- Lemons that are hard usually have too much pith and less flesh
- Lemons should have a very strong fragrance when scratched with thumbnail

Use: Desserts, sauces, fish, poultry, zested for garnish
Select: Thin rinds that yield slightly to the touch with a strong fragrant zest
Avoid: Soft fruit with blemishes, bruises or moist spots, green color or dried stem-ends
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 3 weeks

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**Limes**
Citrus Fruit

Appearance: Golf ball sized to large marble sized with smooth skin  
Color: Shades of green  
Texture: Firm  
Flavor: Tart to sour

- Limes should have a thinner rind than a lemon, so should be a bit softer.  
- Avoid limes that are rock-hard, they have no juice.  
- Limes should have a very fragrant odor when scratched with your nail.

Use: Juiced for cocktails, paired with spicy items like Thai, Indian, Indonesian cuisines.  
Select: Softer limes without bruises or brown spots and a fragrant zest odor  
Avoid: Very hard fruit with blemishes, bruises or moist spots  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 3 weeks

**Mache**
Salad Greens

Leaves: Small, dime-sized  
Color: Medium green  
Texture: Soft, delicate  
Flavor: Slightly nutty

- Also called lamb’s lettuce

Use: Salads with other delicate lettuces like Bibb or Boston  
Select: Firm, crisp, green leaves  
Avoid: Moist, wilted leaves that stick together  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 5 days
**Mangoes**  
Tropical Fruit

Appearance: Small football shaped with smooth multi-colored skin  
Color: Red, yellow, orange and green  
Texture: Firm  
Flavor: Sweet and juicy

Mangoes will continue to ripen at room temperature, so you can choose one that is slightly green, with a clean, fragrant aroma, and a smooth skin without blemishes or cuts.

Use: Eaten raw, in spicy or tropical foods, as a tenderizer for meats  
Select: Slightly green fruit with a clean aroma and smooth skin  
Avoid: Wrinkled fruit with bruises, blemishes or cuts, or soft at the stem end  
Storage: Refrigerated with air circulation  
Life: 2 weeks

**Melons**  
Melons

Appearance: Volleyball to basketball sized with irregular or netted skin  
Color: Tan, light green or yellow  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Sweet and juicy

- Sweet melons include cantaloupes, casabas, Crenshaws, and honeydews because they have rough, netted skin.  
- Melons are 90% water, so are not usually cooked. Cooking destroys all their texture.  
- Because sweet melons have a central seed cavity, you’ll see people “thumping” their melons. If your melon sounds hollow when thumped, or has seeds rattling around when shaken, it’s an older melon, and the central cavity is degrading.

Use: Cut, sliced, served with cheeses or cured meats like prosciutto  
Select: Smell is the best indicator, a strong, fresh aroma from a heavy, solid melon  
Avoid: Soft or moist spots, bruises, or hollow-sounding melons  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 3 weeks
**Mushrooms**  
Fungi

Appearance: Very small, central stalk leading to “umbrella” covering  
Color: White or shades of brown  
Texture: Very soft and delicate  
Flavor: Mild to nutty

- There are hundreds of varieties of mushrooms, each with distinct appearance, texture, and flavor

Use: Soups, salads, sauces, stuffing, steamed, sautéed, grilled  
Select: Clean, firm mushrooms with true color to the variety  
Avoid: Soft, discolored, moist mushrooms with overly dry stem  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week

**Mustard Greens**  
Cooked Greens

Appearance: Large, firm leaves with ruffled edges and central stalk  
Color: Green  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Peppery

Use: Salads, garnish, sautéed, braised  
Select: Crisp, bright green leaves  
Avoid: Brown spots, discoloration, wilted leaves, stalk rot  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week
Napa Cabbage

Appearance: Squat, oblong head, small football shape
Color: Light green with white ribs
Texture: Tender leaves, crisp stalks
Flavor: Mild and more moist than green or red cabbages

- Also known a Chinese cabbage

Use: Stir fry, Asian cuisines, soups, steaming
Select: Clean, crisp heads with soft green leaves
Avoid: Wilted leaves, dry root end, brown spots or blemishes
Storage: Refrigeration in a plastic bag
Life: 2 weeks

Nectarines

Stone Fruit

Appearance: Tennis ball sized round fruit with fuzzy (peach) or smooth (nectarine) skin.
Color: Yellow, pink, and red with some white varieties
Texture: Soft and tender
Flavor: Sweet and juicy

- Peaches and nectarines are either freestone where the flesh separates easily from the pit; or clingstone where they don’t.
- The color of a peach or nectarine is not an indicator of its ripeness or flavor.
- These fruit will soften after harvest, but will not ripen further.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, baked goods, pureed for cold soup
Select: A noticeable sweet aroma, good size, and firm flesh with bright color
Avoid: Wrinkled skin, soft spots, bruises, dry stem end
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 2 weeks
**Okra**
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Quill shaped with 4-5 pronounced external ridges
Color: Green
Texture: Hard and stalky
Flavor: Sweet and mild

Use: Soups, pickled, boiled, steamed, breaded and fried, in stews or gumbo
Select: Small pods that are deep green and slightly soft at the tip
Avoid: Pale green color, hard, stiff tips, root end decay, brown or soft spots
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture Life: 1 week

**Onions**
Onion

Appearance: Tennis ball to soft-ball sized with paper-thin outer skin
Color: White, yellow, red, beige
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Strong and sweet to bitter

Use: All kitchen applications, grilled, poached, roasted, sautéed, baked
Select: Dry, firm, heavy onions with dry and brittle outer skin
Avoid: Green sprouts, bruises, moist or soft spots
Storage: Room temperature
Life: 3 weeks
**Oranges**  
*Citrus Fruit*

Appearance: Tennis ball to softball size round fruit with slightly pocked skin  
Color: Orange  
Texture: Firm  
Flavor: Sweet

- Valencia and Navel oranges are seedless, the most popular.  
- Blemishes on an orange do not affect the flavor and texture of the juice.  
- If sample oranges cut, look for full, plump sections and thin rind.  
- Ripe oranges should be VERY fragrant when scratched.

Use: Juiced, sectioned for salads, garnish  
Select: Ripe oranges should yield to pressure and recoil, have a bright orange color and a very strong fragrant zest aroma  
Avoid: Soft fruit with blemishes, bruises or moist spots  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 3 weeks

**Papayas**  
*Tropical Fruit*

Appearance: Look like very large pears, but the size of a melon  
Color: Yellow with green or red and pinkish skin  
Texture: Soft  
Flavor: Very sweet and juicy

- Color of the skin is the best indicator of ripeness, as a more ripe papaya will be a brighter yellow with less green.  
- These are edible and can be used for garnish, or dried and roasted for a peppery snack.  
- Papayas contain papain, a natural tenderizers that breaks down proteins. This is why meats are marinated with papaya juice or slices.  

Use: Pureed for drinks, chilled soups, sorbets or as a meat tenderizer  
Select: Mostly yellow papayas with smooth skin that yields to pressure  
Avoid: Green color, bruises, blemishes, dried stem end  
Storage: Refrigerated with air circulation  
Life: 2 weeks
**Parsnips**

Root

Appearance: Long, pencil shape like a carrot  
Color: White  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Mild to peppery  

Use: Salads, steamed, grilled, roasted, braised, pureed for soup, in baked goods  
Select: Clean, white color, crisp, stiff, with smooth skins.  
Avoid: Hairy parsnips that are bendable or soft  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks

**Peaches**

Stone Fruit

Appearance: Tennis ball sized round fruit with fuzzy (peach) or smooth (nectarine) skin.  
Color: Yellow, pink, and red with some white varieties  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Sweet and juicy  

- Peaches and nectarines are either freestone where the flesh separates easily from the pit; or clingstone where they don’t.  
- The color of a peach or nectarine is not an indicator of its ripeness or flavor.  
- These fruit will soften after harvest, but will not ripen further.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, baked goods, pureed for cold soup  
Select: A noticeable sweet aroma, good size, and firm flesh with bright color  
Avoid: Wrinkled skin, soft spots, bruises, dry stem end  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 2 weeks
**Pears**

Tree Fruit

Appearance: Baseball sized thin stem end to bulbous blossom end  
Color: Green, yellow, red  
Texture: Hard, soften when ripe  
Flavor: Sweet

- Like apples, there are hundreds of varieties of pears, but only a few that you’ll find in the grocery store.  
- Unlike apples, pears will not fully ripen on the tree, and will continue to ripen after you’ve purchased them.  
- You can tell everything you need to know about a pear from the stem end. Always purchase pears with the stem in tact. It should be firmly affixed. Allow pears to ripen at room temperature. They will not do so under refrigeration.

Use: Raw with cheeses, jams, jellies, compotes, sauces for game or pork, baked goods  
Select: Firm but yields slightly at the stem end with consistent color  
Avoid: Brown spots at the stem end, dry stem, bruises or moist spots  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 4 weeks

**Peas**

Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Oblong pod filled with round seeds  
Color: Green  
Texture: Pod is stringy and fiberous, peas are soft and delicate  
Flavor: Delicate, mild flavor

Use: Soups, sauté, braising, blanched in salads or garnish  
Select: Small pods that seem overly filled and about to burst  
Avoid: Drab color or dry, split pods or peas that are not round.  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week

*Chef Todd Mohr – The Apples to Zucchini Guide to 83 Fruits and Vegetables in Your Market*
Peppers
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Sweet peppers are bell shaped, hot peppers generally torpedo shaped
Color: Green, red, yellow, orange, purple, black
Texture: Crisp and firm
Flavor: Sweet to spicy to very hot

- There are seemingly endless numbers of members of the capsicum family.
- They are generally divided into sweet peppers and hot peppers, each with a central seed cavity, internal rib structure, and colored flesh.

Use: Baked, grilled, fried, sautéed, pureed for soups, stuffed, julienne for stir fry
Select: Plump, brightly colored peppers with smooth skin and bright green stem
Avoid: Soft, wrinkled, dull peppers with loose seeds inside and a dry stem
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture, OR roast and remove skin, freeze the filets
Life: 1 week raw, 6 months roasted and frozen.

Pineapples
Tropical Fruit

Appearance: Football sized pine cone with sharp green leaves atop
Color: Yellow to beige with green leaves
Texture: Hard and prickly
Flavor: Very sweet and juicy

- Pineapples do not ripen after harvesting. They must be left on the stem until completely ripe. However, they are then very perishable. So, unless you’re in Hawaii, it’s very difficult to get a truly ripe pineapple.
- While it will not continue to ripen, a pineapple will become sweeter when left in a windowsill for a day before eating.

Use: Eaten raw, baked, grilled, sautéed, juiced
Select: Yellow color that yields slightly to the touch with sharp leaves
Avoid: Wilted or brown leaves, moist soft spots, or moist shrub end
Storage: Refrigerated with air circulation
Life: 2 weeks
**Plantains**  
*Tropical Fruit*

Appearance: Bunch of long, finger-shaped fruit with smooth skin  
Color: Green  
Texture: Hard and stalky  
Flavor: Bland and starchy

- Plantains are larger, harder, and less sweet as bananas. Plantains will continue to ripen after harvest like bananas, but with a much higher starch content, will always be more stalky and bitter.  
- Plantains are not eaten raw, but are always cooked. Generally, they are treated more like a starchy vegetable or root item than like a banana.

Use: Sauté, pan fried, grilled, stewed, steamed or mashed  
Select: Large, full fruit with more berry shape than string bean shape  
Avoid: Bruises or moist spots or overly dry stem end or white mold developing  
Storage: At room temperature in a paper bag in darkness  
Life: 1 week

**Plums**  
*Stone Fruit*

Appearance: Golf ball sized round fruit with smooth skin.  
Color: Green, yellow, red, or eggplant purple  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Sweet and juicy

- Different from Peaches, Plums will continue to ripen at room temperature.  
- Plums deteriorate quickly with the stem removed, so avoid plums with brown spots or dry sockets where the stem had been.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, baked goods, puddings  
Select: A noticeable sweet aroma, good size, and firm flesh with bright color  
Avoid: Wrinkled skin, soft spots, bruises, dry stem end  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 2 weeks

*Chef Todd Mohr – The Apples to Zucchini Guide to 83 Fruits and Vegetables in Your Market*
**Potatoes**  
_ROOTS_

Appearance: Round to oblong shape with thin outer skin  
Color: White, red, or purple  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Mild to starchy

Use: Salads, steamed, grilled, roasted, braised, mashed, pureed for soup  
Select: Firm, heavy potatoes with shallow eyes and thin skin  
Avoid: Sprouting potatoes, green coloring, soft or moist spots, deep eyes  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks

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**Radicchio**  
_SALAD GREENS_

Leaves: Wrinkled, soft at edges firm at stalk  
Color: Red and white  
Texture: Soft and pliable  
Flavor: Bitter

- A softball sized head that looks like a small red cabbage

Use: Sparingly in salad mix, appetizer cup, grilled or braised, cooked as vegetable  
Select: Firm, compact heads that are heavy for their size, deep red color  
Avoid: Brown and wilted leaves, light heads, any brown color on leaves or stalk  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks
**Radishes**

*Roots*

Appearance: Small, round, marble-sized with thin root and top greenery
Color: Generally red, but there are white and black varieties
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Bitter and peppery

Use: Salads, steamed, stir-fry
Select: Firm, plum, clean radishes with smooth skin and fresh greenery. Avoid: Soft, hollow, or with broken skins or decayed greenery
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 4 weeks

**Raspberries**

*Vine Fruit*

Appearance: Marble sized berry that looks like a bunch of tiny grapes
Color: Red
Texture: Very soft and fragile
Flavor: Sweet

- Raspberries are the most fragile of all fruits.
- When ripe, they pull easily from their vine or bush, leaving a hard white center behind, and giving the characteristic hollow-cone shape of the pinkish red fruit
- Raspberries have tiny external seeds, and are very susceptible to mold.

Use: Jams, jellies, compotes, salads, sauces for game or spicy foods, baked goods
Select: Full, plump, bright berries that are loose in the container
Avoid: Soft berries, white mold, or juice stains in the container
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation
Life: 3 days
**Rhutabagas**

*Root*

Appearance: Round, tennis ball sized with one end slightly pointed.
Color: Purple to yellow skin, yellow flesh
Texture: Hard
Flavor: Starchy

Use: Baked, boiled, pureed or sliced and sauteed
Select: Small, firm, heavy vegetables
Avoid: Soft or moist spots, deep cuts in the skin
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 3 weeks

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**Romaine Lettuce**

*Salad Greens*

Leaves: Elongated with thick middle rib
Color: Outer leaves are dark green inner leaves pale green to yellow
Texture: Hearty, crisp
Flavor: Mild

- Strong texture with mild flavor to stand up to strong dressings

Use: Caesar Salad, sandwiches, composed salads
Select: Dark outer leaves and tight, compact head
Avoid: Loosely packed heads, brown spots, wilting leaves, brown at stem end
Storage: Refrigeration in a plastic bag
Life: 2 weeks
Savoy Cabbage  
Cooked Greens  

Appearance: Softball sized head of ruffled, wrinkled, veiny leaves  
Color: Green with white veins and stalk  
Texture: Tender and soft  
Flavor: Mild  

Use: Stir fry, soups, steamed, plate liner, garnish  
Select: Tight, compact deep green heads with soft leaf edges  
Avoid: Dried core ends, blemished leaves, moist brown spots  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 4 weeks

Scallions  
Onion  

Appearance: Pencil sized with flat, straight leaves and bulbous root end  
Color: Green leaves, white root  
Texture: Firm root, soft leaves  
Flavor: Pungent and fragrant  

Use: Stir fry, garnish, sauté, soups, sauces  
Select: Bright green leaves and clean white bulbs  
Avoid: Flexible roots, limp leaves, dried leaves, dry root ends, moisture or discoloration  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week
**Shallots**  
Onion

Appearance: Small, marble-sized, with one flat side and a root end with paper thin skin  
Color: Beige skin with white to purple flesh  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Mild  

Use: All kitchen applications: sauté, roasting, braising, poaching, sauces  
Select: Plump and heavy for their size with dry outer skin  
Avoid: Green sprouts, soft texture, dried root end,  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks

**Snow Peas**  
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Flat pod whose seeds fill only ½ the pod  
Color: Green  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Sweet and delicate  

Use: Salads, stir fry, steamed, blanched for appetizer, even split and stuffed  
Select: Bright green firm pods that will snap when bent  
Avoid: Brown spots, flexibility, or shriveled appearance  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 5 days
**Spinach**  
Salad or Cooked Greens

Leaves: Oblong leaves with central rib  
Color: Green to dark green with white rib  
Texture: Tender  
Flavor: Rich and chewy

- Can be cooked or used as a salad green

Use: Salads, vegetable side dish, appetizer dips, stuffing  
Select: Deep green leaves that are dry with white ribs  
Avoid: Moist or wilted leaves that show decay  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week

**Winter Squashes**  
Gourd

Appearance: Softball to basketball sized with hard outer skin  
Color: Green, yellow, or orange  
Texture: Stalky or stringy, very hard, firm flesh  
Flavor: Mild

- Winter squash: Acorn, butternut, spaghetti, pumpkin, banana

Use: Baked, steamed, sautéed, pureed for soup, baked in sauce  
Select: Firm, full, heavy squash with true color for the variety  
Avoid: Dry stems, bruises, soft spots, or evidence of insects  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 4 weeks
**Summer Squashes**

*Squash*

Appearance: Medium pear-shape to spear-shaped  
Color: Yellow, green, orange  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Mild

- Summer Squash: yellow crookneck, zucchini, patty pan

Use: Salads, sauté, steaming, grilling, baking  
Select: Smooth, shiny bright skins with uniform color and firm texture  
Avoid: Soft, moist or wrinkled fruit  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 2 weeks

**Strawberries**

*Vine Fruit*

Appearance: Large marble sized, heart shaped with top greenery  
Color: Red  
Texture: Soft and delicate  
Flavor: Sweet

- Always examine the bottom of a strawberry container. If you find red juice, white mold, or crushed berries, this will quickly ruin the rest of the box.  
- Avoid berries with the hull removed or “pared” as they will deteriorate quickly.  
- Huge berries may look like a bigger bargain, but the larger the berry, generally the more white core or hollow center with little juice.

Use: Jams, jellies, salads, compotes, sauces, baked goods  
Select: Small berries of bright color with greenery still attached  
Avoid: Soft berries, wilted greenery, juice stains or white mold  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 1 week

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**String Beans**
Seed Vegetables

Appearance: Long, pencil shape with bulging internal seeds  
Color: Bright to dark green or yellow  
Texture: Stringy and fiberous  
Flavor: Mild

- String beans, Pole Beans, Snap beans, haricot vert, wax beans

Use: Steaming, sautéing, stir fry, blanched for salad, baked in sauce  
Select: Bright color, crisp beans that don’t bend  
Avoid: Soft, pliable beans with brown or black spots, or dry, open pods  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 5 days

**Tangerines**
Citrus Fruit

Appearance: Golf ball to softball sized with loose rind  
Color: Orange  
Texture: Soft  
Flavor: Sweet

- Often called mandarin orange.  
- The rind on a tangerine is loose compared to other citrus, which may cause you to mistake it for rotten.  
- Soft tangerines are acceptable, hard tangerines are not.  
- Do not judge tangerines by their skin. They’re often irregular and lumpy. The smoothness of the skin has nothing to do with quality.

Use: Sectioned and eaten raw or in fruit salads, or for garnish  
Select: Soft tangerines with loose skin and consistent color with strong zest fragrance  
Avoid: Hard fruit with green streaks that are dry or soft at the stem end  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 3 weeks
**Tomatoes**  
Seed Vegetable

Appearance: Round to slightly oblong, baseball sized with thin skin  
Color: Green, red, yellow  
Texture: Soft and tender  
Flavor: Sweet and acidic

Use: Soups, salads, baked dishes, pureed for sauce, pan fried, roasted  
Select: Smooth, shiny bright skins with uniform color and firm texture  
Avoid: Soft, moist or wrinkled fruit  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 1 week

**Turnips**  
Root

Appearance: Round, tennis ball sized with flat root end  
Color: White and red to purple skin, white flesh  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Mild to peppery

Use: Steamed, baked, pureed  
Select: Small turnips with smooth skin and heavy for their size  
Avoid: Rubbery or limp with dry or soft spots and excessive bruises  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 3 weeks
**Turnip Greens**  
Cooked Greens

Appearance: Long, thin leaves with central stem  
Color: Green with white stem  
Texture: Firm  
Flavor: Bitter

Use: Steamed, sautéed, baked, braised  
Select: Slightly indented leaves with white stalk and firm texture  
Avoid: Soft, moist leaves with bruises, tears, or moist spots  
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture  
Life: 2 weeks

**Watermelons**  
Melons

Appearance: Very large, heavy melon with smooth skin and thick rind  
Color: Green, pink, white with black flecks  
Texture: Hard  
Flavor: Very sweet and juicy

- Watermelons differ from sweet melons in their size, color, shape, and location of their seeds.  
- Watermelons can grow to enormous sizes, most sweet melons cannot.  
- A watermelon will continue to ripen off the vine, so you can choose a melon that is dark green with a hard flesh.

Use: Eaten raw, fruit salads  
Select: Dark green melons with a hard flesh and dark black seeds  
Avoid: Bruises, soft or moist spots or white seeds  
Storage: Refrigerated allowing air circulation  
Life: 2 weeks
Zucchini
Squash

Appearance: Medium pear-shape to spear-shaped
Color: Green
Texture: Soft and tender
Flavor: Mild

Use: Salads, sauté, steaming, grilling, baking
Select: Smooth, shiny bright skins with uniform color and firm texture
Avoid: Soft, moist or wrinkled fruit
Storage: Refrigeration with air circulation and moisture
Life: 2 weeks