



FOR THE FARM WIFE AND FAMILY

—by Mrs. Richard C. Spence

—IT DOESN'T PAY TO PINCH? Buying fresh fruit is a touchy subject. People touch, pinch and rub fresh fruit trying to squeeze out the best ones. Rough handling causes fruit spoilage and waste. The grocer has no choice but to pass this loss to the consumer, so costs go up.

Take advantage of seasonal buys in blueberries, grapes, melons, nectarines, peaches and plums when they are in season. Quality is higher and prices more reasonable.

Blueberries that are plump, firm, uniform in size and free from stems or leaves are the best buy. A dark blue color with a silvery bloom is a good indication of quality. This silvery bloom is a natural protective coating.

White or green grapes are sweetest when the color is yellowish or straw color with an amber tinge. Red varieties are better when a rich, red color is predominant over most of the berries. No matter what variety you choose, pick plump grapes that are firmly attached to the stem. Bunches are more likely

to hold together if stems are green and pliable.

In order to select melons, you must know the signs of maturity and ripeness. A mature fruit is ready to be picked; a fruit will ripen properly if it's picked when mature; otherwise it won't ripen at all.

A thick and coarse netting or veining on a cantaloupe means that it's mature. If all or part of the stem base remains or the stem scar is jagged, the melon's probably not mature.

A ripe cantaloupe will have a yellowish cast, pleasant odor and will yield slightly to (light) thumb pressure on the blossom end of the melon. Most supermarket cantaloupes are quite firm when freshly displayed. Hold them at room temperature until completely ripe.

Choose honey dew melons with a soft, velvety feel. A ripe honey dew is slightly soft at the blossom end, has a faint fruit aroma and a yellowish white to creamy rind color.

There are so many varieties of peaches it's easier to list what not to look for. Very firm or hard peaches with distinctly green ground color won't ripen

properly. Also avoid very soft fruits, which are overripe. Don't buy peaches with large flattened bruises or with signs of decay.

Plum varieties differ widely in appearance and flavor, so you should buy and taste just a few to see if that variety appeals to you. Avoid fruits with skin breaks, punctures, or brownish discoloration.

The characteristics of both a peach and plum are combined in a nectarine. Look for rich color, plumpness and a slight softening along the "seam."

It seldom pays to buy perishable fruit just because the price is low. Unless the lower price is a result of overabundance, the so-called bargain may be unusable. Remember fruits are perishable — buy only what you can use.

—STORING FOOD PROPERLY ELIMINATES WASTE? Proper storage is as important as buying food and cooking it well. Wasted food affects both your health and your purse. You probably waste a great deal of food each year as a result of spoilage.

Foods are perishable and many require refrigeration. Proper refrigeration saves food values and there is a right place for every type of food.

Meat takes the largest share of the food dollar. Therefore, you will want to give it special attention. Remove the store wrapping from meat or poultry as soon as possible after bringing it home and cover it loosely with plastic wrap or waxed paper. Many refrigerators have a special meat compartment, or store it near the freezing unit.

Empty ground meat from the paper tray to a refrigerator dish and chill quickly. Plan to use ground meat within two days or freeze it for later use.

Cooked meat, meat stock, or left-over meat should be chilled

rapidly. Don't cut, slice or grind left-over meat until you're ready to use it.

Dairy products and eggs require immediate refrigeration. Cover milk and butter tightly and keep it away from foods with strong odors and flavors. Cheese needs to be tightly wrapped and soft cheese should be used within one or two days. Eggs hold quality longer if kept in a covered container and stored with the large end up. Never wash eggs until you're ready to use them. These food items may lose some nutritive value and provide a growing place for bac-

teria if left out of the refrigerator for long.

Fresh greens and vegetables should be trimmed before storing. If you don't have a vegetable crisper, place them in a covered pan, plastic vegetable bag or other covered container and place them on the lower shelves of the refrigerator.

Before they are stored in the refrigerator, fruits such as bananas, melons, pears and pineapples need to ripen at room temperature. Fruits with thick protective coverings like oranges and grapefruits don't need

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