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BUYING FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

No. 2

Market Basket Mastery Series

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To Buy or Not to Buy "Bargain Merchandise"

Surplus crops or an exceptionally good purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables on a rising market, may enable retailers to feature "specials" which offer the public real value. But as a rule, bargain goods are not the best buys. Overripeness, deterioration or poor quality are more often the reasons for disposing of these perishables before a small loss becomes a total loss.

Size Alone Does Not Determine Quality

The largest fruit or vegetable is not necessarily the best quality—remember that when your eyes tell you to reach for the big ones. Pithiness and thick skin as well as lack of juice are often characteristics of large citrus fruits. Over-large vegetables may frequently be tasteless, pithy, or woody.

Appearance Alone Does not Determine Quality

As a general rule, the higher priced fresh fruits and vegetables are the ones that have a better appearance. They are free from wasteful cracks, blemishes and decay . . . they give more value because of less waste from paring away the unusable parts. On the other hand, citrus fruits may be bronzed or russeted in color and still have plenty of juice; pears often have a russeted appearance and apples minor skin blemishes yet their flesh may be excellent for your purpose. Carrots without tops may be just as fresh as those with tops, while slightly over-ripe tomatoes or wilted celery may be entirely satisfactory for soups, but would prove tasteless and insipid for serving in some other manner.

Buy in Season

Seasonal fruits and vegetables are usually best in flavor and the best price wise.

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Consider the Use of the Fruit Or Vegetable You Buy

If it is to be served whole, as a stuffed tomato, perfection in size and shape is important; but if it is to be cut up as in a tossed salad, uneven sizes or even a few imperfections that do not affect the interior portion are permissible. All fresh vegetables, regardless of use, should be crisp, tender, free from bruises, and fresh appearing, to assure better flavor and more vitamin C.

Select Personally

Only you know the use intended for your purchase.

Buy by Weight or Measure

The method of pricing may result in a deceiving idea of values. You will find tomatoes and fruits offered by the box, the basket, the pound, or even the dozen. Buying by weight or measure is usually preferable. See that the containers hold full measure and that the product is of good quality throughout the pack.

Looking for Freshness

Choose ripe but firm fruit. Select well-formed, fresh-looking vegetables with no decay or wilting.

- a. Stalk vegetables—(celery) stems are tender and firm.
- b. Pod vegetables—(such as snap beans) free of bruises; firm and crisp.
- c. Root vegetables — (such as carrots) firm, good color, smooth.
- d. Leafy vegetables—(such as cabbage) bright color, crisp.
- e. Flower vegetables — (such as broccoli) clusters tight and close together.

Handle Perishables With Care in the Retail Store

Fresh fruits and vegetables because of their perishability, require constant attention on the part of the retailer to keep their fresh appearance. The less you handle them when purchasing the longer their life. Don't pinch, squeeze or touch them unnecessarily at any time, for bruising leads to decay and results in more spoilage for your retailer. When you handle produce, treat it gently, for if a store's spoilage losses increase, its over-

head goes up and this added cost is reflected right back to you in the higher prices that you'll pay for merchandise.

Make Use of Trimmings and Outside Leaves

These trimmings, finely chopped, make nutritious, colorful, tasty additions to the salad bowl.

Nutritionally Speaking Some Fruits and Vegetables Give You More for Your Money

Some fruits and vegetables contain more vitamin A and/or vitamin C than others. Generally dark green or yellow vegetables contain more vitamin A. Citrus fruits, raw cabbage, raw strawberries, cantaloupe and tomatoes are some of the better sources of vitamin C.

Compare Costs of Fresh, Canned or Frozen Fruits and Vegetables

Compare for flavor, appearance and cost. To figure price per serving, divide total cost by the number of servings your purchase will yield. Season, special sale price and quality of food also enter the picture. There are some differences in nutritive value of foods prepared in different ways, but usually the differences are small. This means we can buy the form that sells for less and still expect to get much the same food value.

Contribution to Diet

Fruits and vegetables are valuable chiefly because of the vitamins and minerals they contain.

Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid) is needed for healthy gums and body tissues. Vitamin A is needed for growth, normal vision, and healthy condition of skin and other body surfaces.

EVERYONE needs at least 4 servings of fruits and vegetables (fresh, canned or frozen) each day.

Include—

- 1 serving of a good source of vitamin C or 2 servings of a fair source daily.
- 1 serving, at least every other day, of a good source of vitamin A. If the food chosen for vitamin C is also a good source of vitamin A, the additional serving of a vitamin A food may be omitted.

The remaining 1 to 3 or more servings may be of any fruit or vegetable, including those that are valuable for vitamin C and vitamin A.

Sources of Vitamin C

Good Sources: Grapefruit or grapefruit juice; orange or orange juice; cantaloupe; raw strawberries; broccoli; green pepper; sweet red pepper.

Fair Sources: Honeydew melon; tangerine or tangerine juice; watermelon; asparagus tips; brussels sprouts; raw cabbage; collards; garden cress; kale; kohlrabi; mustard greens; potatoes and sweet potatoes cooked in the jacket; spinach; tomatoes or tomato juice; turnip greens.

Sources of Vitamin A

Dark-green and deep yellow vegetables and a few fruits, namely: Apricots, broccoli, cantaloupe, carrots, chard, collards, cress, kale, pumpkin, spinach, sweet potatoes, turnip greens and other dark-green leaves, winter squash.

This is No. 2 in the series "Market Basket Mastery." Others are:

1. First Aids to Food Buying.
3. Buying Canned and Specialty Foods.
4. Buying Meat.
5. Buying Convenience foods.

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