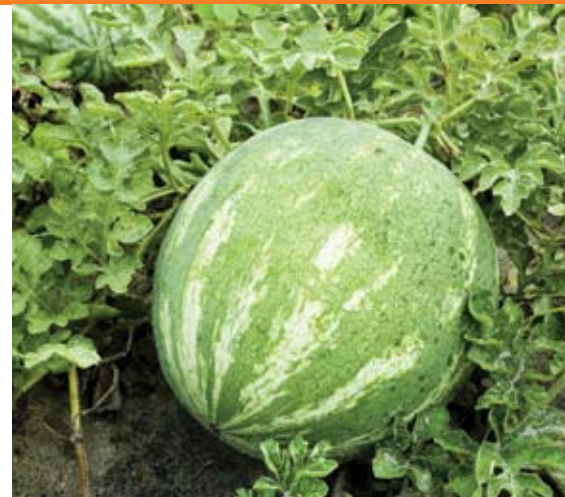


Watermelon has Safe Handling Practices

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), you should wash all fruits and vegetables, including all melons, in clean, running water before eating them. Don't forget to dry too! This is true of all fruits and vegetables, rinds or not.

Here are some steps to consider when enjoying watermelon:

1. Select the best melon possible. As a general rule of thumb, "when in doubt, throw it out." At some point or other, everyone who purchases fresh produce may not get around to consuming it in time. The outside of the melon should be firm and free of any major cracks or dents.
2. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before cutting watermelons.
3. Before cutting, wash the outer surface with cool tap water and dry to remove surface dirt.
4. Wash all food-contact areas and equipment, such as cutting boards, counter tops, peelers and knives with hot water and soap to avoid cross contamination.
5. Maintain the temperature of watermelons. If you purchased it at room temperature, you can keep it at room temperature. If you refrigerate it after purchasing, be sure to keep the watermelon cool.
6. Always refrigerate watermelon once you have cut into it. Either place in covered container, or cover the cut surface of a melon with plastic wrap to prevent the flesh from becoming mushy. Always refrigerate immediately.



Safe and Clean

Did you know that watermelon is one of the naturally cleanest produce items available to your customers? In the recent Pesticide Data Program Annual Summary of fruits and vegetables tested, watermelon and eggplant had the lowest number of detectable residues. They were the cleanest in the group! Because of watermelon's naturally smooth, non-porous skin, it has a built-in protection against many of causes of food borne illnesses.

Wisdom from the Partnership for Food Safety Education

Information from the Partnership for Food Safety — Produce Handling Education campaign recommends the following steps to help reduce the risk of food borne illness from fresh produce.

● Check

Check to be sure that the fresh fruits and vegetables you buy are not bruised or damaged.

Check that fresh cut fruits and vegetables like packaged salads and pre-cut melons are refrigerated at the store before buying. Do not buy fresh cut items that are not refrigerated.

● Clean

Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.

Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards, counter tops, peelers and knives that will touch fresh fruits or vegetables before and after food preparation.

Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled “ready-to-eat”, “washed” or “triple washed” need not be washed.

Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.

Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel. Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.

● Separate

When shopping, be sure fresh fruits and vegetables are separated from household chemicals and raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood in your cart and in bags at checkout.

Keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry or seafood in your refrigerator.

Separate fresh fruits and vegetables from raw meat, poultry and seafood. Do not use the same cutting board without cleaning with hot water and soap before and after preparing fresh fruits and vegetables.

● Cook

Cook or throw away fruits or vegetables that have touched raw meat, poultry, seafood or their juices. Refrigerate all cut, peeled or cooked fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours.

● Throw Away

Throw away fresh fruits and vegetables that have not been refrigerated within two hours of cutting, peeling or cooking.

Remove and throw away bruised or damaged portions of fruits and vegetables when preparing to cook them or before eating them raw.

Throw away any fruit or vegetable that will not be cooked if it has touched raw meat, poultry or seafood.

For more information on safe food handling, visit the Partnership for Food Safety Education website at www.fightbac.org