

## Vegetable Storage Tips

These come from Gretta Anderson's Shared Harvest Winter CSA.

There is a lot of information on the net about how to store vegetables. What follows are some tips that you may find helpful. A quick reference is the [Storage Guidelines for Fruits and Vegetables](#) from Cornell University Extension. [The National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) is also highly recommended for information about food storage.

Adapted from Richard Harrison, *How to Store Vegetables in a Typical Suburban Home FIRST*, identify the areas in your house that do not freeze and may be suitable for storing vegetables.

### **Refrigerator, 40 degrees, 90% humidity**

Apples, beets, bok choy, Brussels sprouts, carrots, cabbage, celeriac, kale and leafy greens, leeks, pears, rutabaga, turnip

### **Unheated entrance or attic or spare room, 55-60 degrees, 70% humidity**

Winter squashes such as butternut, delicata, acorn squash, sweet potatoes

### **Cellar, dark, cool, damp corner, 33-50 degrees**

Onions, garlic: do best in 65-70% humidity

Potatoes do best in 80-90% humidity

*SECOND*, prepare the vegetables for storing. Each vegetable will be discussed below under its storage area.

Before discussing each vegetable observe the following rules of thumb when storing vegetables.

\*Never wash a vegetable that you are preparing for storage. Washing shortens storage life, sometimes by months.

\*When storing in a plastic bag in the refrigerator make sure that you remove as much air from the bag as possible before storing.

### **Refrigerator**

#### **Beets**

Cut the tops off. If the tops are in good shape wash them and cook them. Yum. Don't wash the beets. Store them in a plastic bag in the back of the refrigerator. The tops where you cut off the greens might be a little rotty. Not to worry. When you peel them the insides will be great. Inside that plastic bag beets in the back of the fridge will keep for months.

#### **Brussels sprouts**

We usually cut the little sprouts off the stem and store them in a plastic bag in the back of the fridge like the carrots. They will keep for at least a couple of months. They will usually keep for up to six weeks.

### Carrots

Store in a plastic bag in the back of the refrigerator. Carrots will keep for months this way. After being stored a long time there may be a white root substance on the carrot. Not to worry. Just peel it off. As long as the carrots are bright orange underneath they will taste wonderful. Organic carrots actually gain sweetness when stored.

### Cabbage

Store cabbage in a plastic bag. When you take it out some of the outside leaves may look mildewed but not to worry. Simply strip off the outside leaves and the inside is as good as new. Cabbage will keep this way in the back of the fridge often for three months.

### Celeriac

Tops will probably be off. Store like carrots. If any part is a bit rotty when you take it out merely cut it off. Chances are the rest is just fine.

### Collard Greens, Kale, other leafy greens

These are not long keepers. Best to eat them within two weeks of the delivery. Immerse in cold water, wrap in a cloth dish towel, and place in your fridge.

### Leeks

Remove any yellowing leaves, store in a plastic bag in fridge.

### Turnips, Rutabaga

Store like carrots

### **Unheated Entrance, Attic Space or Unheated Spare Room**

The temperature in this area should be between 50 and 60 degrees. Make sure that this area doesn't freeze. For example, a bulkhead might freeze.

The rule of thumb that I use for vegetables stored in this category are as follows:

\*Store items one level deep on trays, preferably open at the bottom for air circulation. I often use the black trays that you get at garden centers when you buy plants. Great recycled item.

\*With squash don't let the items touch each other

\*Make sure that some ventilation is feasible. For example store trays on a rack with some circulation

\*Keep the area dark. This is particularly important for garlic and onions that will begin to sprout if exposed to light

\*Inspect all items when taking something from storage. If there are signs of spoilage, noted below, use the item as soon as possible

\*Always store the best specimens the longest. Use broken stem squash first. Butternut squash Has the longest storage life of any squash. It will sometimes last the whole winter if the storage location is cold and dry enough. If you see any spots developing use as soon as possible. Spots develop into rotty areas and eventually the whole core will rot, and the squash will be unusable.

If you need to fix too much squash because it is spoiling simply cut up a whole bunch, steam it, and freeze the pieces for consumption later in the winter.

#### Delicata squash

Delicata does not store well. Use this squash within six weeks of the delivery. If delicata is starting to go it will probably be too late to salvage anything. It is too small a squash to recover rot.

#### Sweet potatoes

“Sweeties” store best at temps between 55 and 60 and relative humidity around 80%. They can do well in these conditions for many months. Plastic bags are not recommended for storing sweeties.

#### **Cellar, in a cool damp corner**

The rules of thumb for the cellar storage are:

\*Store items one level deep on trays as above.

\*Some ventilation is helpful.

\*Keep the area dark. This is particularly important for potatoes that will begin to sprout if exposed to light

\*Inspect all items when taking something from storage. If there are signs of spoilage, noted below, use the item as soon as possible

\*Always store the best specimens the longest.

#### Onions

The length of time that onions will store is highly dependent on the variety – the onions in the multi-farm winter share are storage onions and should last several months, especially if stored in a dark, cool area. Onions like to be stored at temps between 33 and 40 degrees. When onions start to sprout they gradually become unusable. If you see an onion sprouting use it as soon as possible. If onions become soft they are rotten and should be removed from storage.

#### Potatoes

Potatoes will usually store 2-3 months. Potatoes like to be stored at 45 degrees with high humidity. If possible store on flat trays. The benefit is the avoidance of the “bad apple” syndrome, and one can inspect all the potatoes as you use them up permitting you to take ones that are beginning to sprout. A soft potato usually means that it is rotten, but cut it up to make sure. Plastic bags are not recommended for storing potatoes.