

PRODUCE TALK

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RETAIL PRODUCE SAFETY TIPS (Source: FMI.com)

Retail In-Store Produce Handling

The following produce handling best practices are designed for supermarket employees, managers, engineering/maintenance staff and associated food safety professionals. The goal of the best practices is to incorporate food safety into everyday departmental tasks. Part 2 of this document was developed using the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code and FMI member retail food safety experience. It outlines best practices from receiving to customer display in order to prevent produce contamination.

Employee Training

- All employees should receive basic food safety training including training on hand washing and hygiene practices, proper temperature control and food handling.
- At least one employee should be trained through a program such as the FMI SafeMark program and certified by the National Registry for Food Safety Professionals.
- Only authorized personnel (e.g., employee cutting fruit) should be admitted to the prep room to reduce cross-contamination of product. The manager, or person in charge, should visually inspect the prep room to make sure the food is protected through hair restraints, proper glove use, proper hand washing, no eating or drinking, proper storage of personal items and proper condition and sanitation of equipment.

Receiving

Receiving of whole produce, fresh-cut produce and other products:

- Ensure supplier is on an approved supplier list.
- Inspect delivery vehicle, when possible, to verify that vehicle and incoming product are free of signs of cross-contamination.
- Accept only products free of visible damage such as mold, evidence of pests, temperature abuse, cross-contamination and compromised packaging.
- Temperatures should be monitored and verified. Use a calibrated and sanitized probe thermometer to ensure internal product temperature of time/temperature control for safety food (TCS) is at 41°F or below. Recommendations to maintain the quality of non-TCS produce are available through various research programs; examples can be found on the following website: <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/producefacts/>.
- It is acceptable to squeeze the probe between two packaged products where necessary.
- The FDA Food Code defines TCS produce as follows:
 - raw seed sprouts
 - cut melons
 - cut leafy greens
 - cut tomatoes or mixtures of cut tomatoes that are not modified in a way so that they are unable to support pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.

Storage

- Temperatures should be monitored and verified as described above.
- Cleaning should be monitored and verified.
- Food storage areas should be frequently cleaned, sanitized and monitored according to a sanitation standard operating procedure (SSOP). Cleaning areas include, but are not limited to walls, ceilings, overhead structures, shelving, floors, drains and cooling units; these areas should be clean, free of standing water and in good repair.
- Products should be visually inspected to prevent cross-contamination during storage. Visual inspection should include an evaluation for risk of splashing from water on floor, dripping water from cooling units over produce or risk from any other source of contamination.
- If ice is used to cool product, the following guidelines should be followed:
 - Ice must be from a potable water source.
 - Ice must be discarded after use.
 - Store iced product to avoid cross contamination from dripping water.

Processing

- Prep room cleaning should be monitored and verified.
- Follow storage guidelines in above section.
- Visual inspection for cross-contamination should be conducted.
- Follow storage guidelines in above section.
- SSOPs should be adhered to for specific equipment, such as ice machines, cutting boards and knives.
- Crisping:
 - Ensure sink is cleaned and sanitized before and after crisping.
 - If produce is covered during crisping, the cover must be easily cleanable.
 - If a bath is used, follow sanitizer recommendations below.
- Rinse fruit and vegetables with running potable water to remove soil. If using a bath, an appropriate sanitizer should be used in compliance with label directions. If applicable to the commodity being washed in a bath (e.g., whole tomatoes), use water 10° F warmer than pulp temperature.
- Pre-chill fruits and vegetables before preparation of TCS. For example, pre-chill cantaloupe in a cooler before cutting.
- Use a clean and sanitized scrub brush for commodities with a tough rind or peel, such as carrots, cucumbers or citrus fruits. Clean and sanitize scrub brushes between uses to deter cross-contamination.
- Wash hands and use gloves appropriately (training required) to cut fruits and vegetables.
- Once TCS fruits and vegetables are cut, reduce internal temperature to 41° F or below and verify with internal reading using a sanitized and calibrated probe thermometer.
- Juice processing:
 - A risk analysis for each type of vegetable/ fruit juice should be conducted.
 - Juice from fruits and vegetables prepared on premises that doesn't undergo a 5-log reduction of the most resistant microorganism of public health significance should be labeled per the FDA Food Code 3-404.11.
 - Cleaning and sanitizing protocols should be in place for the juice equipment (with consideration of cleaning/sanitizing equipment between the uses of produce with different risk levels to the consumer).
 - If the juice is packaged and stored for sale, it should be maintained at 41° F or below unless it is determined to be non-TCS through using the FDA Food Code Annex 3 1-201.10(B) Decision Tree #1.

- Nut butter processing:
 - Employees should monitor the nut butter grinding area to deter cross-contact.
 - Develop a rigorous cleaning/sanitizing protocol for the nut butter equipment (a food safety consultant may be necessary).
 - Protocols should be in place to prevent cross-contact between tree nuts/peanuts, and their products, and other produce.
- Perishable donations:
 - Label donations and separate from other food for retail sale.
 - Whole fruit should be cool, dry, without significant decay and stored in a sanitary container.
 - Cut fruit should be bagged separately, at 41°F or less and without significant decay or color change.

Display

- Ensure product is labeled according to local, state and federal regulations. This includes displaying necessary allergen signage.
- Check code dates and cull for off quality.
- Salad bar should be monitored by a trained employee and food shall be protected from consumer contamination with food guard or other device. Ensure that heat transfer is appropriate.
- Utensil handle should be stored to avoid contamination of food.
- Store allergens in a manner that deters cross contact to non-allergen foods.
- Monitor condition of displayed products (e.g., mold, off-colors, off-odors), with particular attention to monitoring TCS at 41°F or below (e.g., bagged salads, cut fruit and salad bar items) using protocol from above sections.
- Ensure display cases are operating efficiently:
 - Ensure that return vents are not blocked
 - Use infrared thermometers to ensure air blowing across product is 37-39°F
 - Adjust product to address warm spots, such as corners of island cases and pegged sections
- Produce misters and reservoirs (if applicable) should use a potable water supply and be cleaned and sanitized per manufacturer's recommendation or at least once a week using procedures described in the FDA Food Code 5-205.14, whichever is more stringent. Mister display case trays and containers should be monitored to avoid standing water.

Additional Considerations

When remodeling, designing supermarkets or under general operating conditions the above best practices are most easily carried out when the following considerations are addressed:

- Easily cleanable equipment
- Efficient display case design for TCS (including employee and consumer education, such as smoke machine demonstration for cold case air flow)
- Active and preventive maintenance systems in place
- Facility is designed for easy cleaning of walls, floors and other areas
- Product is stored off of the floor
- Pest control procedures are in place
- Guidelines for employee personal hygiene
- SSOPs should be in place and updated
- Food safety, Engineering, Maintenance and Operations interdisciplinary cooperation and consulting for design

Additionally, the overall store design should emphasize a logical flow of processes to aid employee produce handling tasks from receiving to customer display.

Western Vegetables

AVOCADOS: Continue cuts and prorates and high markets; will continue until we get into newer supplies out of Mexico.

BROCCOLI: Supplies are being affected by the higher temperatures in California; we are looking to move to Michigan grown product if quality becomes an issue.

CAULIFLOWER: Market has gradually decreased as the higher temperatures effect quality and color.

CELERY: Market is starting to come off as supply has been slowly increasing.

GREEN ONIONS: Markets begin to decline as quality issues have been decreasing.

LETTUCE: Due to higher temperatures in California, Iceberg Leaf lettuces supply has leveled out. Tip burn has become a wide spread issue.

Value-Added

The extreme high temperatures in California over the past two weeks has caused many quality issues and lower yields on raw crops for processing. Most varieties of conventional and organic baby greens, baby spinach, etc. have been affected.

Southern Vegetables

CABBAGE: Still available from Michael's without any problems.

CUCUMBERS: Cool temperatures at night as affected production on cucumbers so markets have increased and supplies have dwindled.

GREENS: Good supplies on all greens coming from Michigan.

ONIONS: Vidalia onions are finished; western sweet onions are available. Quality is good and markets are steady.

PEPPERS: Really nice California product.

POTATOES: Markets remain firm. Russet quality is improving.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH: Prices are up and supplies are tough out of the Midwest.

Organics

BEETS: Beets still remain a challenge due to curly top virus that impacts the plant leaves and bulb. Supplies will be limited for a few more weeks until growers move to lower elevation new fields that should be clean.

BROCCOLI: Due to weather issues (heat) in growing regions in the west, we are seeing suppliers limit available supply driving market cost up. There will be discoloration to the tops as heat will cause a darker head on the broccoli.

BUNCH CARROTS: Supply is available, though due to high temps we are seeing discoloration to the tops of the product.

CABBAGE: Regional supply has really come on from Ohio and other surrounding areas. Great time for promotion!

CAULIFLOWER: Supplies are starting to improve and the quality is good. Market has gradually decreased; high temperatures out west should not affect supply.

CELERY: Supply is getting better as we have moved up in to California product starting out. Pricing has come down and it getting promotable.

CUCUMBERS: Supply is extremely limited! Western supply has not been available and most product in the southeast has been affected by the various weather issues.

GREEN PEPPERS: Steady supplies regionally with good quality.

KALES: Great supplies of kale currently, plenty of regional product from all over the Midwest available. We are sourcing from North Carolina, Ohio and other regions. Product is in great supply and pricing is very promotable.

LETTUCES: The inbound quality we are seeing out west is showing russet and leaf mildew. We are sourcing as much from Canada as possible due to better quality. Iceberg lettuce will be a struggle as supply is not meeting good arrival.

RADISHES: Supplies are improving with better quality tops. Very little damage now to the tops and they look much cleaner than they have been.

YELLOW SQUASH & ZUCCHINI: Supply has been very good out of Ohio on the zucchini with yellow being much more limited.

Asparagus

Markets are sky-high right now and do not expect that to change throughout September until there's better availability from Peru, once southern regions start to harvest. Organic asparagus has been added on; product coming out of Mexico.

Fruit

APPLES & PEARS: New Crop Washington apples are starting to roll in. New varieties will be added each week. Looks to be a good crop this year with the volume being in 80 size and smaller. New crop Washington Honeycrisp are now available. Michigan Paula Red, Gold Delicious, Gala and Macintosh are now available in a 12/3# poly bag. New varieties will be added weekly. Michigan Honeycrisp are now on guides. New Crop California Bartlett and Bosc pears are now available. Washington Danjou are starting slow with only very small fruit available.

BLACKBERRIES: Remaining strong but some deals available. Organics are starting to increase.

BLUEBERRIES: Very stable and solid pricing on pints currently. Organics are rapidly rising and supplies are dwindling. Late September will see supplies dropped significantly out of Michigan; new crop Argentina will be small volume and high priced. Pints will come off and all blues will switch back into 6oz pack.

CANTALOUPE & HONEYDEWS: Domestic cantaloupe and honeydew pricing is a promotable level.

CHERRIES: Cherries season is over with most growers now finished packing for the year. Late elevation cherries are now the main supply area and product is very limited with this coming week wrapping up the season. Costs up but overall size and quality is good (9 to 9.5 cherries).

CITRUS: Hurricane Irma wreaked havoc on the Florida citrus crop. Early estimates that citrus damage ranges from around 30 to 70%; harvest was just getting under way.

CLEMENTINES: Little market change on South Africa and South America. Supplies somewhat uneven.

FIGS: There are three varieties, browns, blacks and tiger stripes.

GRAPES: Good quality from the California Delano region. We'll see Holiday red seedless by the end of September. Projected harvest to start around September 26th but could be affected by the extreme temperatures in the region; this could cause red grapes not coloring up so there may be a delay. A novelty item is Sweet Sapphires, which is the Witches fingers; it's a great eating grape.

POMEGRANATES: Crop started with early Wonderful variety; true Wonderful's not until 1st of October. Organics have also begun and first arrival will be end part of next week; very high priced;

RASPBERRIES: Like strawberries, we are starting to see supply affected by the higher temperature.

STRAWBERRIES: With the increased temperatures in growing regions, we are starting to see loading and available supply slow down. Inbound quality will be an issue as with higher temperatures will bring increased bruising and sun-scold.

Stone Fruit

Stone fruit is winding down but there is some later deals that offer some really nice quality fruit. Prima peaches new item for this coming week with high quality Prima Gattie variety starting to ship late next week. Nectarines good value with nice quality fruit with great size still shipping, but will tail-off over next weeks. Black plums going into the last varieties and run into mid-October with Angelo variety. Pluots readily available with all colors. Still excellent availability on Washington organic peaches and nectarines; available with high volume through end of September.

Tropical Fruit

BABY FRENCH BEANS: Market slightly stronger; could be supply issues from hurricane problems in Miami.

LIMES: Prices has firmed up and increased on some sizes, with better demand this week. Size 200 and large remained limited. Overall quality is very nice.

MANGOES: Conventional product is still in good supply. Organic fruit is starting to tighten up and will see a short two to three week gap near the end of September into early October.

MARIDOL PAPAYAS/ GOLD PAPAYAS: Stable market and supply but could change with damage assessment from Hurricane Irma.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS/SNO PEAS: Sno market increasing; sugar snaps stable.

Merchandising Tips

The 10 Foot Rule

I thought that I would revisit one of my favorite rolls and one that can make a big difference to your department in the store. The customers are the life of any business. Taking a few moments to make every customer feel special is very important to the lifeblood of your store.

All you have to do is remember "The 10 Foot Rule" to make every customer feel special. Anytime you or a team member have a customer that gets within 10 feet of you, just acknowledge them. Give them a simple "How are you today or may I help you find anything today." Even notice what they want, and asking, do you have a question about that item? Or just helping them figure out the best apple to bake a pie with. Saying and doing things such as this will go a long way to making your customer feel special. It could be a new customer coming into your store and this simple act could make them return.

Get your produce team behind "The 10 Foot Rule", by setting the example. You as the produce manager can help to enforce this by posting signs around the prep area and cooler. Remember that every customer that comes into your store wants to feel special.

CROSSET NEW ITEM & DELETION SHEET

W/B: 9/24/17

ITEM #	NEW ITEMS	SIZE
31070	Rave Apple	40#
30030	Braeburn Apple 80 CT	40#
33950	Granny Smith Apple 80 CT	40#
35149	Michigan Honeycrisp Apple	38#
35820	6/14 OZ Apple Bite Red	6/14OZ
35825	6/14 OZ Apple Bite Green	6/14OZ
33425	3# Gold Del Apple	12/3#
33765	3# Gala Apple	12/3#
35154	OG Honeycrisp Apple	40#
9425	Og Arugula	12ct
9450	Og Arugula	24ct
101100	Og Pie Pumpkins	30#
69615	Concord Grapes	12/1#
97430	OG Pomegranates	30/32ct
97415	Cv Pomegranates	30ct
16530	OG Asparagus	11#
14215	Sprout Strait Clover	6/4oz
DELETIONS		
23010	Rhubarb	20#
33770	3# Wash Gala Apple	12/3#
35147	3# Fuji Apple	12/3#
33445	3# Ginger Gold Apple	12/3#
1220	Honey Kiss Melons	9ct
1340	8 CT Honeydew	8ct
2125	Seeded Watermelon	35ct
1840	Seedless Watermelon	45ct
2110	Seedless Watermelon	60ct
18095	Hatch Chili Pepper Hot	25#
18096	Hatch Chili Pepper Mild	25#
73020	OG red plums	28#
71050	Southern Peaches 2 3/4"	25#
71055	Southern Peaches Bulk	25#
68062	Wash Cherries FM	18#
68025	Washington Cherries 10.5r	18#