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Mary A. Keith, PhD, LD/N
Hillsborough County Extension Agent
(813) 744-5519, ext. 136
email: makeith@mail.ifas.ufl.edu

Is It Ripe Yet?

Now that our fruit is being shipped in from all over the world, it can be hard to find really ripe fruit. It's picked early so that it can be shipped. But when it arrives in the grocery, or on your counter, how can you tell when it's ready to eat?

It's fairly easy to tell when a banana is ripe. It turns yellow. Some people like to wait till it gets little brown spots, others like lots of brown. That's your personal choice. If it's not ripe enough when you buy it, just wait a few days and it will ripen.

But some fruit, especially grapes, pineapples and watermelon, will not get any riper after they are picked. Apricots will get softer but not any sweeter after picking. Leaving these fruits sit on the counter will only make them mushy and soft, but not sweeter. Buy what you can use in a few days, not more.

Some fruit can ripen after being picked. Mangoes and papayas do very well. Peaches, pears and cantaloupes will also ripen more. Leave them at room temperature in a dish or paper bag. Sealing fruit in a plastic bag only lets it spoil faster.

Peaches and nectarines should have a creamy yellow color, not green or white, between the red 'cheeks'. Pears should be slightly yellow under the green or brown. These fruits will be just slightly soft when ripe, but squeezing them is not a good way to tell. Trust your nose, they should all have a sweet fruit odor. Underripe fruit is hard and crisp, and not sweet. Keep them on the table until they soften. Refrigerating can make the insides turn brown.

Cantaloupes should be yellowish between the netting lines, not green. They should smell like melon, and the flower end (opposite the end where the stem was)

should be slightly soft. Pineapple should also smell sweet and fruity, and be mostly golden yellow, not green.

Avocados don't start to ripen until they are picked. Keep them at room temperature. The small avocados with a pebbly skin should turn black when they're ripe. Large Florida fruits and small, smooth-skinned Mexican avocados stay green. They're ripe when they are just barely soft when squeezed lightly.

Plums and cherries should be a deep, dark red or deep yellow gold, and firm instead of soft or mushy. Usually ripe fruit has a rather shiny skin. Overripe fruit is dull and watery, underripe fruit is paler and hard.

Choose your fruit carefully and enjoy great flavors and good health!

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