

FARMERS MARKETS



Handling Fruits and Vegetables

Proper safe handling and storage practices of fresh fruits and vegetables are important to prevent cross-contamination from microorganisms. This can occur during the preharvest, harvest and processing activities and can lead to bacterial contamination of food that can cause foodborne illnesses and outbreaks.

Pre-harvest and harvest

- Apply good agricultural practices (GAPs) and good manufacturing practices (GMPs) at every stage of the chain to prevent and minimize microbial hazards associated with the food.
- Test the water that is used for fruits and vegetables for potential microbial contamination.
- When raw manure or waste is used, it should be managed closely to reduce microbial contamination of fresh produce.
- Hygiene and sanitization are important along all points from the farm to the consumer.
- Clean and sanitize harvesting equipment to keep it free of debris or manure.
- Harvest containers should be cleaned and sanitized to prevent cross-contamination of fresh produce.

Packaging and processing

- Remove soil, mud and dirt from fruits and vegetables outside the facilities before taking them to the packaging area.
- Discard, repair, clean and sanitize all containers, pallets or bins before placing the fresh produce.
- Clean and sanitize the equipment and machinery that comes in contact with fresh produce.
- Clean and sanitize areas in which fresh produce is processed each day.

Transportation

- Clean and sanitize vehicles to reduce the risk of microbial contamination.
- Set and maintain appropriate temperatures of fresh produce to ensure safety and quality.
- Avoid damage to the produce by using proper containers and loading carefully.
- Identify the following: date of harvest, farm identification and who handled the produce from grower to receiver.

Storing and selling

- Separate fruits and vegetables that will be consumed raw from meat, poultry or seafood.
- To avoid drips that might contain harmful bacteria from raw meats, poultry or seafood, do not store fresh produce below it.
- Refrigerate precut or peeled fruits or vegetables at 40 F within two hours.
- For cooking, expose the product to temperatures above 90 F and then cool down and refrigerate at 40 F.
- Do not place containers with produce on the floor. Use a pallet or other containers to avoid contamination.

References

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