

5 things you should not store in your fridge

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Tomatoes: Technically a fruit, but taste-wise, it is closer to a vegetable. If you have ever grown tomatoes, then you know that they love the heat and hate the cold. It turns out even after they are plucked from the vine, they still dislike cold. The refrigerator is not the ideal place to store tomatoes. Store them there and your perfect tomatoes turn into a great disappointment. They will still be good for cooking, but not the best for eating fresh. Store them on your counter instead (but not in direct sunlight) and enjoy them when they are ripe.



Basil: Tomatoes and basil go well together on your plate and they have similar needs in the storage department too. Like tomatoes, basil loves the heat, so extended periods of time in a cold environment like a refrigerator causes it to wilt prematurely. Basil will do best if it is stored on your counter and treated as you would fresh cut-flowers. A fresh bunch of basil can be stored for in a cup of water (change it every day or two) away from direct sunlight. Covering it loosely with a plastic bag will help keep it moist (but make sure the bag has an opening to allow for some fresh air in).



Potatoes: Potatoes like cool, not cold temperatures. They do best at around 7 degrees celsius, which is about 10 degrees warmer than the average refrigerator. Most of us do not have a cool, dark place to store root vegetables like potatoes, so keeping them in a paper bag in a coolish spot is best. Why paper? It is more breathable than plastic so potatoes will not succumb to rot as easily. And why not the refrigerator? Storing potatoes at cold temperatures converts their starch to sugar more quickly, which can affect the flavour, texture and the way they cook.



Onions: Onions do not come out of the ground with that protective papery skin. To develop and keep that dry outer layer, they need to be "cured" and kept in a dry environment like a pantry, which is not as damp as the refrigerator. Also, a lack of air circulation will cause onions to spoil, as will storing them near potatoes, which give off moisture and gas that can cause onions to spoil quickly. Store onions in a cool, dry, dark, well-ventilated place as light can cause the onions to become bitter. Scallions and chives, however, have a higher water content, bruise more easily and have a shorter shelf life, so store them in the refrigerator.



Avocados: Avocados do not start to ripen until after they are picked from the tree. If you are buying a rock-hard avocado, do not store it in your refrigerator, as it slows the ripening process. On the other hand, if you have a perfectly ripe avocado that you are not ready to use, storing it in the refrigerator may work to your advantage by prolonging your window of opportunity to use it before it becomes overripe. So the bottom line on storing avocados is store hard, unripe avocados on your counter and store ripe avocados in your refrigerator if you are not going to eat them right away.