

From Arugula to Zucchini

How to store all your CSA vegetables and herbs



ROOT RADICAL
COMMUNITY SHARED AGRICULTURE

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Introduction

Properly storing vegetables is a key to CSA success. If you take a bit of extra time after pick-up to put away your vegetables properly, they will last longer and you can enjoy them all week, until the next pick-up.

This guide is not meant to be read front to back. Rather it is intended as reference material. I encourage you to read and familiarize yourself with page 2 to 4. Then simply visit the appropriate sections of the guide as new vegetables get introduced throughout the season or whenever you are having difficulty with storing a particular vegetable or herb.

Humidity and Temperature

You can maximize the storage life of your vegetables by meeting their specific humidity and temperature needs.

Most produce should be stored in the fridge between 0°C and 4°C. Please check that your fridge is the correct temperature. If vegetables are freezing or spoiling quickly, an affordable max/min thermometer in the fridge door helps you monitor the temperature. Check it regularly and adjust the dial incrementally up or down until it's just right.

The right humidity depends on the bag or container your veggies are stored in. This guide will give you the recommendations and details you need you find the right balance between holding and releasing excess moisture for each vegetable.

Fridge Organization

Obviously, crisper drawers are great for veggies but you'll probably find some overflow during the CSA season. (And there's a risk that vegetables jammed into the bottom of the fridge can be overlooked when they are at peak freshness.)

One long time CSA member uses clear plastic totes in the fridge to create extra crisper space. Depending on the time of year, she places one or two of these totes on the top shelf and pulls them out when cooking so that she can see all the vegetables at once. That way the veggies don't get pushed to the back of the fridge where they can be forgotten or get frosted. She puts the more unusual or challenging veggies in these bins so she doesn't forget to use them.



Vegetable Triage

Put a list of what's stocked in your fridge on the door and use this to help with meal planning. You can then highlight or circle any items, like vegetables or leftovers, that you know you need to use up today or tomorrow.

Some vegetables just don't store as well as others, so it's good to plan your meals around those limitations.

Here's a quick reference list of vegetables to prioritize for using early (or preserving for long term storage):

- Basil
- Broccoli
- Cilantro
- Green Onions
- Peas (especially sugar snap and shelling)
- Rhubarb
- Ripe Tomatoes
- Delicate Greens
 - Arugula
 - Baby Kale
 - Lettuce Mix
 - Mizuna
 - Mustard Greens



Storing Greens

Greens are packed with nutrients and taste great; eating lots of them makes me feel healthier and more energetic.

They are also the most challenging vegetables to store. That’s why I am putting them here at the beginning of the guide. Fortunately, the many different types of greens we grow on the farm, can be grouped into two categories for storage: Delicate and Hardy.



Delicate Greens – Arugula, Baby Kale, Lettuce Mix, Mizuna, Mustard Greens Mix

Typical Harvest Period					
June	July	August	September	October	November
Baby Kale Lettuce Mix Mustard Mix	Baby Kale Lettuce Mix	Lettuce Mix	Baby Kale Lettuce Mix Mizuna	Arugula Baby Kale Lettuce Mix Mizuna	Arugula

Short term storage: Best for about 3 to 5 days in the fridge in a plastic bag.

Drain any excessive moisture from bag on the day you pick up. Leave it loosely open and do not tie or otherwise seal up the bag.

To extend the storage up to 7 days, transfer the greens to a hard sided vented container on the day you pick up the vegetables. You can buy a “produce saver” container or simply save, wash and reuse a vented container from grocery store mixed greens. Line the container with a paper towel to absorb the excess moisture. As you transfer the greens keep an eye out for any yellow leaves and discard them. It is important to balance holding and releasing excess moisture. Ideally

you'll use these greens every day or two and you can check and change the paper towel if it gets saturated.

Long term storage: Coarsely chop, lightly steam and freeze for soups, stews and stir fries. Make pesto and freeze for adding to pasta, pizza, sandwiches, chicken or salmon. Freeze raw for green smoothies.



Hardy Greens – Bok Choy, Head Lettuce, Kale, Spinach, Swiss Chard, Tops (Beet, Turnip and Kohlrabi)

Typical Harvest Period					
June	July	August	September	October	November
Bok Choy	Kale	Kale	Kale	Kale	
Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce	Lettuce	
Heads	Heads	Heads	Heads	Heads	Kale
Spinach	Swiss Chard	Swiss Chard	Swiss Chard	Spinach	Spinach
Swiss Chard	Tops			Swiss Chard	
Tops					

Short term storage: Keeps 5 to 7 days in the fridge in a plastic bag or hard sided container.

If the greens came in a bag at CSA pick up, make sure to drain any excessive moisture from bag on the day you pick up. This will be most important for Swiss Chard.

Most of these hardy greens do not come in a bag at CSA pick up, so please transfer them into a bag or container when you get home.

Some options:

- Reuse plastic bags (from produce, bulk foods, bread) as long as they are clean and dry. If you are using plastic bags, leave loosely open and do not tie or otherwise seal up the bag.
- Purchase reusable “produce saver” bags or vented containers.
- Save, wash and reuse a hard-sided vented container from grocery store mixed greens.

Long term storage: Coarsely chop, lightly steam or blanch and freeze for soups, stews and stir fries. Make pesto and freeze for adding to pasta, pizza, sandwiches or chicken. Freeze raw for green smoothies.

Storing Herbs

Please note that there is a separate guide explaining in more detail 10 methods for preserving herbs. So I recommend you check that out if you are interested in the long term storage options for herbs.



Basil

Typically harvested in June (greenhouse) and July through September (field garden).

Short term storage: Do not refrigerate.

Cut off the bottom ½ inch of stem with a sharp knife and trim away any spoiled leaves. Put the stems in a vase of water. The stem may wilt initially but should revive again within a day.

Put your vase somewhere you will see it daily because sometimes a stem or two will not “take”. In that case either use it immediately or discard. Change or top up the water a couple of times per week.

Basil can keep for several weeks this way but use it up before that because it’s delicious!

Long term storage:

Dehydrate and store in a glass jar.

Freezer method 1: Food process the leaves or finely mince with a knife. Press into ice cube tray(s) and cover with a little bit of water in each cube. Place the tray in the freezer. Once frozen transfer to bags if you wish. May discolour your ice cube tray or give your future ice cubes a basil flavour.

Freezer method 2: Tear leaves off the stem and wash. Pat leaves dry with a towel and place in freezer bags. Remove air from the bag, label (date and contents) and put in the freezer.

Freezer method 3: Make pesto and freeze.



Cilantro

Typically harvested from late June to October.

Short term storage: Keeps 5 to 7 days in the fridge in a plastic bag or vented container. Follow directions for “Delicate Greens” on page 3, if you are having trouble with storing this item

Long term storage:

Freezer method 1: Food process the leaves or finely mince with a knife. Press into ice cube tray(s) and cover each with a little bit of water. Place the tray in the freezer. Once frozen transfer to bags. May discolour your ice cube tray or give it a cilantro flavour.

Freezer method 2: Tear leaves off the stem and wash. Pat leaves dry with a towel and place in freezer bags. Remove air from the bag, label (date and contents) and put in the freezer.

Freezer method 3: Make pesto and freeze.



Dill

Typically harvested once in June or July and once in September.

Short term storage: Store in a bag in the fridge for up to a week. Drain excess water and leave bag open at the top.

Long term storage: Dehydrate or freeze.

Freezer method 1: Food process the leaves or finely mince with a knife. Press into ice cube tray(s) and cover each with a little bit of water. Place the tray in the freezer. Once frozen transfer to bags. May discolour your ice cube tray or give it a dill flavour.

Freezer method 2: Tear leaves off the stem and wash. Pat leaves dry with a towel and place in freezer bags. Remove air from the bag, label (date and contents) and put in the freezer.

Freezer method 3: Make pesto and freeze.



Mint

Typically harvested from June to November.

Short term storage:

Method 1: Cut off the bottom ½ inch of stem with a sharp knife and trim away any spoiled leaves. Put the stems in a vase of water. The stem may wilt initially but should revive again within a day. Change or add water as needed.

Mint can keep for several weeks this way, but use it up before that, because it's delicious!

Method 2: Lay sprigs out on a plate at room temperature. The mint will begin to dry but you can pluck leaves as needed. Once totally brittle and dry, remove the leaves from the stem and store them in a jar

Long term storage: Dehydrate and store in a glass jar.

Freezer method 1: Food process the leaves or finely mince with a knife. Press into ice cube tray(s) and cover each with a little bit of water. Place the tray in the freezer. Once frozen transfer to bags. May discolour your ice cube tray or give it a mint flavour.

Freezer method 2: Tear leaves off the stem and wash. Pat leaves dry with a towel and place in freezer bags. Remove air from the bag, label (date and contents) and put in the freezer.



Oregano

Typically harvested from July to October.

Short term storage:

Method 1: Wrap in paper towel and put in a bag in the fridge. With this method oregano will keep about a week.

Method 2: Lay sprigs out on a plate at room temperature. The oregano will begin to dry but you can pluck leaves as needed. Once totally brittle and dry, remove the leaves from the stem and store them in a jar.

Long term storage: Dehydrate and store in a glass jar.



Parsley

Typically harvested July to November.

Short term storage: Store in a bag in the fridge for up to a week. Drain excess water and leave bag open at the top.

Long term storage: Dehydrate or freeze.

Freezer method 1: Food process the leaves or finely mince with a knife. Press into ice cube tray(s) and

cover with a little bit of water in each cube. Place the tray in the freezer. Once frozen transfer to bags. May discolour your ice cube tray or give it a parsley flavour.

Freezer method 2: Tear leaves off the stem and wash. Pat leaves dry with a towel and place them in freezer bags. Put bags in the freezer.

Freezer method 3: Make pesto and freeze.



Rosemary

Typically harvested June to November.

Short term storage:

Method 1: Wrap in paper towel and put in a bag in the fridge. With this method rosemary will keep about a week.

Method 2- Lay sprigs out on a plate at room temperature. The rosemary will begin to dry but you can pluck leaves as needed. Once totally brittle and dry, remove the leaves from the stem and store them in a jar.

Long term storage: Dehydrate and store in a glass jar.



Sage

Typically harvested between July and November

Short term storage:

Method 1: Wrap in paper towel and put in a bag in the fridge. With this method the sage will keep about a week.

Method 2: Lay sprigs out on a plate at room temperature. Try to remember to turn the sprigs once a day. The sage will begin to dry but you can pluck leaves as needed. Once totally brittle and dry,

remove the leaves from the stem and store them in a jar

Long term storage: Dehydrate and store in a glass jar.



Thyme

Typically harvested between July and November.

Short term storage:

Method 1: Wrap in paper towel and put in a bag in the fridge. With this method thyme will keep about a week.

Method 2: Lay sprigs out on a plate at room temperature. The thyme will begin to dry but you can pluck leaves as needed. Once totally brittle and dry, remove the leaves from the stem and store them in a jar.

Long term storage: Dehydrate and store in a glass jar.

Storing Vegetables



Beans

Typically harvested in July, August and September.

Short term storage: Keeps for one or two weeks in the fridge in open plastic bags or vented container.

Long term storage: Blanch and freeze.



Beets

Typically harvested from late June to October.

Short term storage: Separate tops, stems and roots right away when putting them away in the fridge. This stops transpiration and reduces moisture loss from roots. It is also more space efficient in your fridge.

Tops: Store the tops as described for “Hardy greens” on page 4.

Stems: Stems are great in soup stock. You can toss them in a freezer bag in the freezer along with other clean vegetable trimmings and peels to boil for stock later. If you don’t make stock, store and use them along with the tops or compost them.

Roots: Will keep in the fridge for several weeks to months in an open or vented bag.

Long term storage: Roots can be pickled, or cooked and then frozen.



Broccoli

Typically harvested in August and September.

Short term storage: You will get broccoli in two formats in your CSA shares. They come as either heads with no bag (similar to how you see them in the grocery store), or as side shoots, packed in a plastic bag.

The shoots keep about 3 to 5 days in the fridge in a plastic bag or hard sided container. You can extend the storage as described for “Delicate greens” on page 3.

If you get shoots in a bag at CSA pick up, make sure to drain any excessive moisture from bag on the day you pick up. If you get head broccoli, transfer them into a bag or container when you get home. Here are some options:

- Reuse plastic bags (from produce, bulk foods, bread) as long as they are clean and dry. If you are using plastic bags, leave loosely open and do not tie or otherwise seal up the bag.
- Purchase reusable “produce saver” bags or vented containers.

- Save, wash and reuse a hard-sided vented container from grocery store mixed greens.

Long term storage: Coarsely chop, lightly steam or blanch and freeze for soups, stews and stir fries.

Freeze raw for green smoothies. Stems are great in soup stock. You can toss them in a freezer bag in the freezer along with other clean vegetable trimmings and peels to boil for stock later.



Napa Cabbage



Sweetheart Cabbage

Cabbage

Typically harvested in July, September and October.

Short term storage: Will keep in the fridge for several weeks to months.

If you don't use the whole thing all at once store the remainder in a open or vented plastic bag.

Long term storage: Pickled cabbage or sauerkraut.



Carrots

Typically harvested from mid to late July through to October.

Storage: Carrots will keep in the fridge for several weeks to months. Store in an open or vented bag so they don't dry out.



Cucumbers

Typically harvested in July and August

Short term storage: Will keep for about week in the fridge. Be extra careful not to let the cucumbers freeze.

Long term storage: Pickles or relish. Cube and freeze for smoothies.



Eggplant

Typically harvested in August and September

Short term storage: Store in the fridge in the crisper. Will keep well for about a week.

Long term storage: Roast and then freeze alone or with other vegetables. Make baba ghanoush and freeze.



Fennel

Typically harvested in July and August.

Short term storage: Keep in the crisper in your fridge for one to two weeks. Use a vented container or open bag to preserve moisture if storing for more than a few days.

Long term storage: Roast, blanch or make soup and then freeze. Make pickles.



Garlic

Typically harvested in late July to early August.

Short term storage: If you plan to use all your garlic within a few weeks, cut the excess stem off and leave it out on the counter in a bowl or basket.

Long term storage: We usually distribute the garlic freshly harvested and partially green. They say that green garlic is as delicate as a peach, so handle it carefully.

Method 1: Hang it to ensure it stores well for use in the coming weeks or months if you wish to wait.

Garlic bunched with twine can be hung to dry in your home. Hang the garlic out of direct sunlight, in a dry location (i.e. away from sinks and stoves) with the leaves and stalks pointing down and the roots pointing up. This orientation helps any water from dew or rain drain out of the stem faster.

Check up on your garlic in a few days and make sure it is drying okay in your chosen location. Check for signs of it getting mouldy and move it if needed.

As the leaves start to become brittle feel free to cut back the messy bits as desired. Or remove the excess stalks entirely. Leave at least 6" of the stalk on the garlic to help lengthen the storage life.

Once dry you can also cut the bunch apart for storage. If properly dried, garlic will store for several months into fall and even winter.

Method 2: Another option is to freeze them. A friend recommended this approach to me as this how her mother has stored garlic for many years. Her mother separates the cloves and leaves the inner most “wrapper” on the clove as extra protection against freezer burn. Then she puts the cloves into freezer bags. The bags go into the freezer and then when you want to use some for a recipe you just take the cloves you need out of the freezer and peel and chop them frozen. Or let cloves thaw and soften before you start cooking.



Garlic Scapes

Typically harvested in late June.

Short term storage: Will keep well in the crisper or in a bag in the fridge for one to two weeks.

Long term storage: Roast, braise or make pesto and then freeze.



Green Onions

Typically harvested most of June and July and occasionally August to November.

Short term storage: Keeps well in the crisper or a bag in the fridge for a week.

To extend green onion storage you can try my mother's technique. Her method is to wash the onions and trim back roots, leaving the only about a half centimeter of roots on the onion. Next she removes yellow leaves and stands them up in a yogurt container. She then covers the whole thing with a bread bag and puts it in the fridge. When she needs to use some onions, she trims the greens back with kitchen scissors. She uses the greens first because that part tends to wilt sooner before the white part.

Long term storage: Chop and freeze. Or add to soup or stew and freeze. Onions are great in soup stock. You can toss them in a freezer bag in the freezer along with other clean vegetable trimmings and peels to boil for stock later.



Ground Cherries

Typically harvested August to October.

Short term storage: Stores best on the counter at room temperature. Remove from the bag so husks will dry and continue ripening just like you would a tomato.

Long term storage: Salsa, chutney, jelly or jam. Remove husks and freeze whole. Can be used as you would other frozen berries. For example: use in smoothies, on cereal, or in fruit desserts such as pies or crisps.



Kohlrabi

Typically harvested in June and July.

Short term storage: Bulb is best eaten within a week or two but will keep in the fridge for several weeks to months. Keeping in an open or vented bag will reduce drying out and extend storage.

Tops: If the kohlrabi comes with the tops you can separate them from the bulb and store as described for “Hardy Greens” on page 2.

Stems: Great addition to soup stock. Toss them in a freezer bag in the freezer along with other clean vegetable trimmings and peels to boil for stock later. If you don’t make stock, store and use them along with the tops or compost them.

Long term storage: Blanch and then freeze. Make fermented kimchi. Pickles.



Leeks

Typically harvested in October.

Short term storage: Stores well in a bag in the fridge for one or two weeks or longer. Drain excess water and leave bag open at the top.

Long term storage: Braise or add to soup and then freeze.



Onions

Typically distributed August through November.

Short term storage: Never leave your onions in the plastic bag. Transfer them to an open container or a paper, mesh or cloth bag when you get them home.

Onions will remain dormant for about 3 months and can be stored at room temperature if you plan to use within that period.

Where ever possible, use the large sweet onions first as they do not store as well as the other yellow storage and red varieties.

Long term storage: If you hope to extend the storage beyond a few months, put the onions in cold storage at low humidity.



Parsnips

Parsnips

Typically harvested in October.

Storage: Will keep in the fridge for several weeks to months. Keeping in a perforated bag will reduce drying out of the roots.



Shelling Peas

Peas

Typically harvested in late June and early July.

Short term storage: After peas are picked the sugars start to convert to starch, particularly in shelling and sugar snap peas. Fresh peas are one of the more noticeable flavour differences between farm fresh and the grocery store. Enjoy or freeze your peas promptly for the freshest flavour! Cold storage slows the sugar conversion so getting your peas in the fridge promptly after pick up makes a big difference.



Snow Peas

Long term storage: Blanch and freeze.

Peppers

Red peppers are typically harvested in August and September followed by green peppers in September and early October.



Snap Peas

Hot peppers are typically harvested August through early October.

Short term storage: Will keep well in the crisper of the fridge for about a week or longer.

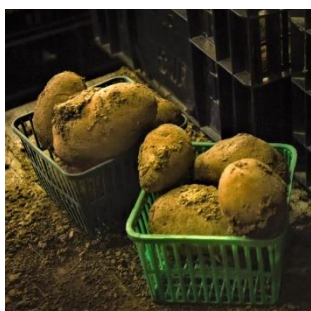


Carmen Sweet Pepper

Long term storage: Roast and freeze alone or with other vegetables.



*Jimmy Nardello
Sweet Pepper*



Potatoes

Typically harvested in late September and October.

Short term storage: Will store at room temperature for at least a couple of weeks. Keep them in the dark or they'll start sprouting.

Long term storage: Will store for many months in a root cellar or other cool dark place.



Rhubarb

Typically harvested in June.

Short term storage: Will keep for about a week in a plastic bag in the fridge.

Long term storage: Chutney, jelly, jam. Chop and freeze for using in pies or crisps.



Spring Turnips

Typically harvested in June and early July.

Short term storage: Separating the tops from roots helps prevent the roots from drying out. Roots will keep for a week or two in an open or vented bag.

Tops: Separate tops from roots. Tops are edible and can be stored as for “Hardy Greens”. Be sure to drain any excess water.

Stems: Stems make a great addition to veggie stock. You can toss them in a freezer bag in the freezer along with other clean vegetable trimmings and peels to boil for stock later. If you don't make stock, store and use them along with the tops or compost them.

Long term storage: Roots can be pickled. Tops can be blanched and then frozen.



Sweet Potatoes

Typically distributed in October and November.

Storage: These are a tropical crop and should not be refrigerated. They will keep well for several weeks to months at room temperature in the dark, such as in a vented box or paper bag.



Tomatoes

Typically harvested from July to September.

Short term storage: Wash tomatoes and sort out any split or bruised ones. Discard or use those immediately. Let them dry in a colander or on a towel. Then store at room temperature in an open container or plate. *Do not put them in the fridge unless absolutely necessary*, as chilling changes the texture and flavour of the tomato. However, chilling will slow the ripening process if you wish to hold your tomatoes longer before eating.

Long term storage: Freezing, dehydrating or canning.



Watermelon Radish

Typically harvested in October and November.

Short term storage: Roots will keep for several weeks or more in the fridge in an open or vented bag.

Long term storage: Roots can be pickled. Tops can be blanched and then frozen.



Winter Squash

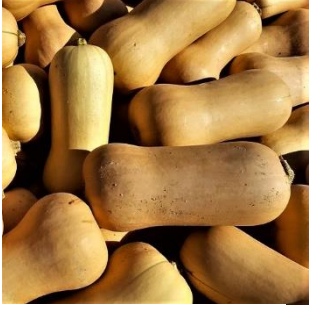
Typically harvested in September and distributed in September and October.

Storage: The ideal storage temperature for squash is 10 to 13 degrees C, however most blemish free squash

Sugar Dumpling
Squash



Acorn Squash



Butternut Squash



Delicata Squash



Zucchini



Summer Squash

will keep for several weeks to months in a cool room or closet or if necessary at regular room temperature.

Zucchini and Summer Squash

Typically harvested in late July, August and early September.

Short term storage: Store in the fridge in the crisper. Will usually keep well for about a week. Very large mature squash with a thick skin, will keep well at room temperature.

Long term storage: Roast and freeze alone or with other vegetables. Grated summer squash can be used for baking.

Acknowledgements

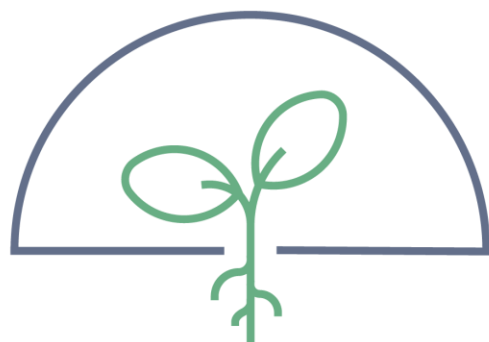
Many thanks to Andree, Aric, Barb and Jolene for all your help with writing and producing this guide.



I'm always happy to hear feedback from CSA members. If you have any suggestions for what to include in future versions of this guide, please contact me to let me know.

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