

FOOD BASICS

BEANS

Beans are a part of the legume family. They are an excellent source of fiber and plant protein. Popular beans include red, kidney, navy, pinto, black, pink, white, garbanzo, lima, mung, and soy.

Buying

You may choose either the dry beans that need to be cooked or the canned beans that require no cooking. Dry beans increase in volume when soaked or cooked. One cup of dry packaged beans makes 2 to 3 cups of cooked beans.

Storing

Dried beans can be stored at room temperature for up to 6 to 12 months in a cool, dry place in airtight containers. Leftover cooked beans may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days in a covered container, or they may be frozen for up to 6 months in airtight containers.

Preparing

1. Sort: Before soaking beans, pick them over and remove any damaged beans, small stones, or twigs.
2. Rinse: Place beans in a colander and rinse with clean, running water.
3. Soak: Most beans will rehydrate to triple their dry size, so be sure to start with a large enough pot. Choose one of the following ways to soak your beans:
 - Hot Soak: Hot soaking helps reduce intestinal gas. For each pound of dry beans, add 10 cups of hot water. Heat to boiling and let boil 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover, and set aside for up to 4 hours.
 - Quick Soak: For each pound of dry beans, add 10 cups of hot water. Heat to boiling and let boil 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover, and set aside for at least 1 hour.
 - Overnight Soak: For each pound (2 cups) of dry beans, add 10 cups of cold water and let soak overnight or at least 8 hours.
4. Cook: Drain soaking water and rinse beans. Cover beans with fresh water. Simmer for 1 ½ to 2 hours until tender but not mushy.

Check the bean package for additional cooking directions.

Cook enough dry beans for more than one meal at a time and freeze. Add a little moisture or seasoning after thawing to restore the flavor and consistency.

Canned beans do not require additional cooking. Draining the liquid and rinsing before using will help decrease the amount of sodium and may help to reduce problems with gas.

Recipes

Bean Spread (page 77), Fiesta Salad (page 40), and Three Bean Salad (page 43)

Source: Washington State WIC Program

BEEF

Beef is the meat taken from a cow. Examples of beef are hamburger (ground beef), ribs, and steak. It is a good source of iron, zinc, and B vitamins.

Buying

Choose leaner cuts of meat. The leanest beef cuts include round steaks and roasts (eye of round, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, chuck shoulder, and arm roasts. Lean ground beef labels should say at least "90% lean." Freshness is important with all meats. Beef should be mostly red or pink and have no odor.

A good buying tip is to purchase meats in family packs and divide it into separate meal-size portions which could be frozen for later use. Beef can also be purchased in larger pieces of meat and packaged into smaller portions. Placing the packages of meat into plastic bags prevents blood from getting onto other foods and causing food poisoning. Always shop for cold and frozen meats last to prevent spoilage.

Storing

Refrigerate meats as soon as possible in the coldest section of the refrigerator on the bottom shelf. If the meat is not used within 3 days, it should be placed in the freezer. If marked for clearance, it should be cooked right away. Proper packaging helps maintain quality and prevent freezer burn. Aluminum foil, freezer paper, air-tight plastic containers, and plastic freezer bags will help food maintain the best quality in the freezer. Plastic wrap alone will not provide enough protection by itself but can be used to separate foods within a package. When packaging food, press out as much air as possible to prevent freezer burn, then wrap tightly. If frozen meats get freezer burn, they are still safe to eat. Cut the freezer-burned portions away before cooking. Cooked beef can be frozen for later use. Frozen beef will be safe indefinitely if stored constantly at 0 °F. However, for best quality, use uncooked steaks or roasts within 4 to 12 months, uncooked ground beef within 4 months, and cooked beef within 2 to 3 months.

Preparing

For thawing meats, follow the information for "Thawing" on page 8. Marinate meats in the refrigerator.

For healthier dishes, trim off visible fat and limit the amount of added oil or butter. To stretch meat dishes, add vegetables, beans, noodles, or rice.

See the "Internal Temperatures for Safe Cooking" table (page 6) in the "Safe Food Handling Guidelines" section.

Recipes

Beef Tomato (page 52), Chow Fun (page 55), Green Beans and Won Bok Stir-Fry (page 60), and Sweet and Sour Beef (page 69)

DAIRY

Dairy includes milk, cheese, yogurt, and other products made from animal milk. These foods are a good source of calcium. Calcium helps build and maintain bones. Be creative in different ways to use dairy foods.

Buying

When buying fresh dairy products, look for the date on the packaging. Manufacturers provide dating to help consumers and retailers decide when food is at its best quality.

Most dairy foods are pasteurized. Pasteurization destroys all disease-producing organisms that may be present, making dairy products safe to consume. The organisms in raw (unpasteurized) dairy products can be especially dangerous to children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

Most dairy foods come in whole and lower-fat versions. Move to low-fat (1%) or fat-free dairy milk or yogurt (or lactose-free dairy). Flavored dairy foods may be high in sugar content, so be sure to check the nutrition facts label. Some dairy products are also available in powder. Individuals who prefer an alternative to dairy can consider non-dairy beverages, such as calcium-fortified soy milk.

When purchasing dairy products and other perishable foods, shop for them last and refrigerate them first when you get home.

Storing

Dairy foods need to be stored in the refrigerator at 40°F or below. Discard all perishable foods left at room temperature longer than 2 hours or 1 hour in temperatures above 90 °F. Dairy products should be used before the date stamped on the packaging for peak quality. As long as cheeses are stored in airtight bags or are tightly wrapped with plastic wrap, hard cheeses will stay fresh up to 3 to 4 weeks and softer cheeses up to 1 to 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

Milk may be frozen for up to 3 months. Soft cheeses don't freeze well, but hard cheeses can be frozen for up to 6 months. Once opened, dry powdered milk can be stored at room temperature in a tightly covered container for up to 3 months.

Preparing

Milk is often served cold as a drink with meals or snacks or in smoothies. Milk can also be used in cooking when making soups or creamed dishes. Always use low to medium temperatures when cooking with milk. High temperatures can cause milk to curdle. Foods that contain milk should be stirred often while cooking to prevent sticking to the pan. Dry powdered milk can be used in place of liquid milk.

Cheese can be served cold and eaten as a snack, appetizer, or a topping for salads. When cooking with cheese, the important thing to remember is that high heat and long cooking times can make the oils in the cheese separate and change its texture. If grating cheese, it may help to freeze the block of cheese for 15 to 20 minutes before grating. Some cheeses, like mozzarella, cheddar, and Monterey Jack, melt well, while others don't melt at all.

Yogurt can also be used in many recipes, such as smoothies, sauces, dips, soups, vegetables, or fruit salads. It can be used in recipes to take the place of mayonnaise, whipping cream, or sour cream.

DAIRY CONTINUED

Recipes

Banana Oat Bread (page 75), Banana Split with Yogurt (page 76), Chia Seed Pudding (page 78), Creamy Fruit Salad (page 79), Fiesta Salad (page 40), Fruit Smoothie (page 80), Fruity Quick Bread (page 82), Papaya Boat (page 83), Ranch-style Dip (page 85), Skillet Pasta (page 68), 'Uala Hummus (page 88), 'Uala Palau (page 90), 'Ulu Chowder (page 46), and Watermelon Smoothie (page 91)

EGGS

Eggs are a good source of protein and other essential nutrients.

Buying

Eggs are sold by grade and size. Most eggs found in grocery stores are large US Grade AA and Grade A eggs. AA and A grades are based on appearance and have nothing to do with nutritional value or size. US Grade AA eggs have whites that are thick and firm. Their yolks are high, round, and practically free from defects, and they have clean, unbroken shells. US Grade A eggs have characteristics of Grade AA eggs except that the whites are less firm.

Eggs of any quality grade may differ in size. Egg sizes are based on their weight. Grocery stores may also carry medium, extra large, and jumbo-size eggs. The color of the eggshell does not affect the flavor, quality, nutrients, or cooking of the egg.

When purchasing eggs, check that none are cracked. A cracked egg may contain bacteria that may cause food poisoning.

Storing

Always purchase eggs before the date on the carton. Store them immediately in the refrigerator set at 40°F or slightly below. Leave them in their carton and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator, not in the door. Eggs may be refrigerated 3 to 5 weeks. After hard cooking, eggs can be stored for a week in the refrigerator. Eggs should be kept away from strong odors for the best taste.

Preparation

Eggs and egg dishes can be served at any meal. Eggs can be cooked in many ways. They can be fried, scrambled, boiled, poached, baked, or made into omelets or soufflés. The different parts of an egg can be used in different recipes, such as the whites used in meringue and the yolks in custards. Cook eggs to 160 °F.

Recipes

Banana Oat Bread (page 75), Fruity Quick Bread (page 82), Gon Lo Mein (page 59), Kalo and Tuna Patties (page 62), Somen Salad (page 42), 'Uala Hash (page 71), and 'Ulu Salad (page 47)

FRUITS

A multicultural state like Hawai'i is fortunate to experience unique fruits from different cultures. Fruits can be included in every course of any meal, from soups to desserts. They can be eaten as a healthy snack at any time. Eating a variety of fruits provides fiber and a range of vitamins and minerals.

Buying

Fruits can be bought fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or in juice form. At the peak of their season, they are plentiful and prices are generally low. When buying fresh fruits, choose those that are firm and fresh in color, without blemishes or soft spots. Avoid purchasing fruits with bruises and mold.

Storing

Fresh fruit is highly perishable and requires refrigeration once it is ripe. Fresh fruits vary widely in their storage times from a few days to several weeks. Very few can be safely stored at room temperature for long, and most must be kept in the refrigerator. Some unripe fruits, such as apples, mangoes, papayas, pineapples, and lilikoi, may be stored out on the counter and eaten or refrigerated when ripe. In warmer climates, dried fruits are best stored in the refrigerator. Avoid over-ripening to keep fruit flies and other insects away.

To prevent bacterial growth and spoilage, fresh fruits should be stored unwashed and then rinsed just before eating. Once fruits are cut, chopped, or cooked, they should be refrigerated in covered containers or plastic bags and consumed within 3 to 4 days. If they are to be frozen, store them in plastic freezer containers or bags.

If spoilage such as mold is seen on fruits, remove them immediately from other fruits to prevent additional spoilage.

Preparing

Before eating or preparing, wash fresh fruits under clean running water to remove any dirt and bacteria, even if the outer skin might not be eaten. For fruits that grow in clusters like grapes and lychees, separate the clusters before rinsing. For waxy-skinned fruits, like apples and mangoes, rub the surface thoroughly under clean running water. For hard or thick-skinned fruits, such as watermelon or cantaloupe, the surface can be scrubbed with a produce brush under clean running water. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas because bacteria that cause illness can thrive in those places. Detergent, soap, bleach, and produce wash are not recommended for washing fruits. They could be absorbed into the fruits that you eat. For fruits which will be stored for later use (see "Storing" above), be sure to drain and pat dry with a paper towel.

Recipes

Asian Chicken Salad (page 35), Banana Oat Bread (page 75), Banana Split with Yogurt (page 76), Beef Tomato (page 52), Chia Seed Pudding (page 78), Chicken Tinola (page 38), Cranberry Chicken Salad (page 39), Creamy Fruit Salad (page 79), Fiesta Salad (page 40), Fruit Smoothie (page 80), Fruity Oat Balls (page 81), Fruity Quick Bread (page 82), Guisadong Sayote (page 61), Pancit (page 64), Papaya Boat (page 83), Pinakbet (page 65), Pineapple Salsa (page 84), Sweet and Sour Beef (page 69), Trail Mix (page 86), Tuna Tofu Salad (page 44), and Watermelon Smoothie (page 91)

KALO (TARO)

Kalo is important in many Pacific cultures. It is most plentiful from February to June. The leaf, stem, and corm (which is the part of the plant that grows underground) can be eaten. Cooked leaves are a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C, riboflavin, niacin, folate, manganese, potassium, and copper. Cooked corm is a good source of fiber, protein, vitamin B6, riboflavin, potassium, and copper. There are up to 600 varieties with white, yellow, orange, pink, and purple corm flesh colors. In Hawai'i, the most common variety sold in markets is the Chinese type "Bun-Long", which has white flesh with obvious purple fibers. The plant is also known as talo (Samoan), gabi (Filipino), yu-tao (Chinese), toran (South Korean), and satoimo (Japanese).

Buying

Purchase kalo corms that are firm and heavy for their size, without soft spots and cracks. These imperfections could be openings for bacterial contamination and may not be food safe. Corm skin should not crumble when scraped. Stems should be firm but not soft. Leaves should be vibrant green in color without yellow or brown spots or edges. Try to choose fresh leaves that aren't wilted.

Storing

It is best to use kalo corms within 2 or 3 days. Keep corms in a cool, dark place, like a paper bag, but not the refrigerator. Kalo leaves can be wrapped in damp paper towels, then placed in a plastic bag to store in the refrigerator for a few days. Kalo leaves, stems, and corms can be thoroughly cooked, then frozen later for use.

Preparing

All parts of the plant must be thoroughly cooked prior to eating to reduce the amount of calcium oxalate crystals, which can cause mouth and throat swelling and irritation. **Do not eat any part of the kalo plant raw.** While preparing any part of the plant, use gloves to prevent skin irritation. Wash the plant well before use.

To steam the kalo corm, cut off the top where the stem grows from. Cut the corm into 2 to 3 inch slices, then put in a steamer. Steam for 1 ½ to 3 hours (time depends on the variety), then test a small piece and see if there is a tingling sensation on your tongue. If so, continue to steam the kalo until it doesn't tingle anymore. Remove the kalo from the steamer and cut the skin off. When cool, cut into recipe-ready size pieces. Corms can also be boiled, roasted, baked, or deep-fried.

Kalo leaves and stems can be steamed, boiled, or added to other dishes. These parts of the kalo plant must also be cooked thoroughly.

Recipes

Kalo and Tuna Patties (page 62)

PORK

Pork is the meat taken from a pig. Examples of pork are ground pork, tenderloin, chops, ribs, pulled pork, ham, and bacon. Pork is a good source of niacin, riboflavin, thiamine, vitamin B6, and Vitamin B12.

Buying

Choose leaner cuts of meat. The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, center loin, and ham. When buying pork, look for cuts with a relatively small amount of fat over the outside and with meat that is firm and a pink color.

A good buying tip is to purchase meats in family packs or larger pieces and divide them into separate meal-size portions. At the market, place the packages of pork into plastic bags to prevent blood from getting onto other foods and causing food poisoning. Always shop for cold and frozen meats last to prevent spoilage.

Storing

Refrigerate meats as soon as possible after purchase in the coldest section of the refrigerator on the bottom shelf. If the meat is not to be used within 3 days, it should be placed in the freezer immediately. If marked for clearance, it should be cooked right away. Proper packaging helps maintain quality and prevent freezer burn. Aluminum foil, freezer paper, air-tight plastic containers, and plastic freezer bags will help keep food at its best quality in the freezer. Plastic wrap alone will not provide enough protection by itself, but can be used to separate foods within another package. When packaging food, press out as much air as possible to prevent freezer burn, then wrap tightly. If frozen meats get freezer burn, it is still safe to eat. Cut the freezer-burned portions away before cooking. It is okay to freeze meat after it has been cooked.

Frozen foods are safe indefinitely if stored constantly at 0 °F. For the best quality, pork roast, chops, and ribs should be used within 4 to 6 months. Ground pork and organs should be used within 3 to 4 months. Pork soups, stews, or casseroles should be used within 1 to 3 months. After that, they will still be safe but may lose quality or dry out.

Preparing

For thawing meats, follow the information for “Thawing” on page 8. Marinate meats in the refrigerator.

For healthier dishes, trim off visible fat and limit the amount of added oil or butter. To stretch meat dishes, add vegetables, beans, noodles, or rice.

See the “Internal Temperatures for Safe Cooking” table (page 6) in the “Safe Food Handling Guidelines” section.

Never eat raw pork in any form, including bacon and sausage. Pork may have a parasite that is passed on to humans so it must be cooked thoroughly.

There are 6 basic ways of cooking meat. Most tender cuts are best cooked by dry heat: roasted, cooked on a rotisserie, broiled, grilled, pan-broiled, or pan-fried. Less tender cuts should be cooked slowly in moist heat: braised, pot-roasted, or cooked in liquid. Pounding or marinating before cooking can also make tougher cuts of meat tender.

Recipes

Choy Sum with Pork (page 56), Eggplant with Garlic Sauce (page 58), Pork Tofu with Watercress (page 66), Somen Salad (page 42), and ‘Ulu Chowder (page 46)

POTATOES

Potatoes are grown around the world, making it one of the world's most common vegetables. Potatoes come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Other parts of the potato plant are toxic and should not be eaten. Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of potassium and vitamin B6.

Buying

Purchase potatoes that are firm, without sprouts, cracks, discolorations, or green skin. There are three basic categories of potatoes: starchy potatoes (such as Russet and Idaho), waxy potatoes (such as red-skinned, fingerling, and new potatoes), and all-purpose potatoes (such as Yukon Gold).

Storing

Potatoes should be stored in a cool, dry place, away from light, and used within 1 or 2 weeks. If any part of the potatoes turns green, peel the skin, shoots, and any green color. It is not recommended to refrigerate potatoes because the starch breaks down into sugar. Refrigeration may also change the potato's taste and cause the potato to darken. Store separately from onions.

Preparing

Starchy potatoes are used for baking, frying, and mashing. Waxy potatoes can be boiled, steamed, or roasted. They are often used in salads. All-purpose potatoes can be cooked in a wide variety of methods, including boiling, steaming, microwaving, baking, mashing, and frying. They can also be used in stews, casseroles, and soups.

Scrub potatoes well with a produce brush. Remove all eyes and sprouts with a knife. If potatoes are cooked whole, pierce each one several times with a fork.

Microwave:

1. Place in microwave and cook on high:
 - 1 potato: cook 4 to 6 minutes
 - 2 potatoes: cook 6 to 8 minutes
 - 3 potatoes: cook 8 to 12 minutes
2. Cover and let stand 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

Rice Cooker:

Place the steamer basket into the rice cooker pot. Place about ½ inch of water in the pot (not to go over the base of the basket). Slice potatoes into 2 inch pieces. Place potatoes in a steamer basket, cover, and turn on the rice cooker. Potatoes will be done when the rice cooker automatically shuts off.

Steam:

Slice potatoes. Place in a steamer over boiling water. Cover and steam for about 10 to 15 minutes. This method results in a potato that is more moist compared to baking or roasting.

Boil:

Place potatoes in a pot. Add water to cover potatoes. Bring to a boil and simmer covered for 20 to 30 minutes. This method results in a potato that is more moist compared to baking or roasting.

Bake:

In an oven or toaster oven, bake at 425°F for 30 to 45 minutes. Baking will generally produce a drier potato.

Source: Michigan State University Extension

POULTRY

Some examples of poultry include turkey, chicken, duck, goose, Cornish hen, pheasant, and quail. Poultry is a good source of protein, phosphorus, and B-complex vitamins.

Buying

Chicken and turkey can be purchased whole or in parts: halves, quarters, breasts, legs, thighs, drumsticks, and wings. When purchasing, there are white and dark meat choices. White meat is generally the breast of the bird and is lower in fat and calories than dark meat. Boneless, skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest poultry choices. Dark meat is found in the thighs and drumsticks of the bird and has more iron and zinc compared to white meat. You can buy skinless parts, or take off the skin before cooking. Wings have the highest percentage of fat when compared to the breast, thighs, and drumsticks.

Poultry can also be bought fresh, frozen, or canned. Chicken and turkey also come in ground form.

Storing

After purchasing poultry, it should be kept in its original wrapper. If the poultry is not used within 3 days, it should be placed in the freezer. If marked for clearance, it should be cooked right away. If frozen, it can keep for 3 to 4 months. Fully cooked poultry can be kept in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days or in the freezer for 2 to 3 months. Refrigerate all leftovers promptly.

Poultry kept frozen continuously at 0 °F will be safe indefinitely, so it's not important if any package dates expire after freezing. For best quality, taste, and texture, keep whole raw poultry in the freezer for up to 1 year, parts for 9 months, and giblets or ground poultry for 3 to 4 months. Cooked poultry will taste best if kept frozen for up to 4 months, cooked poultry casseroles or pieces covered with broth or gravy for 6 months, and chicken nuggets or patties for 1 to 3 months.

Proper packaging helps maintain quality and prevent freezer burn. Aluminum foil, freezer paper, air-tight plastic containers, and plastic freezer bags will help food maintain its best quality in the freezer. Plastic wrap alone will not provide enough protection by itself, but can be used to separate foods within another package. When packaging food, press out as much air as possible to prevent freezer burn, then wrap tightly.

Preparing

Thaw frozen chicken in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days or by setting your microwave to defrost. Thaw frozen turkey in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 days (under 20 pounds) and 3 to 4 days (over 20 pounds). Be sure to cook the thawed poultry promptly.

If roasting a whole chicken or turkey, remove the wrapper and giblets from the cavity of the bird. Prepare and cook stuffing separately.

For more information on thawing poultry, see "Thawing" (page 8). Marinate poultry in the refrigerator.

For healthier dishes, trim off visible fat and limit the amount of added oil or butter. To stretch poultry dishes, add vegetables, beans, noodles, or rice.

See the "Internal Temperatures for Safe Cooking" table (page 6) in the "Safe Food Handling Guidelines" section. Poultry must be cooked thoroughly, never partially cooked. Juices from the poultry should be clear, not pink or red. Insert a food thermometer into the thickest part of the poultry to check if the internal temperature is 165 °F.

POULTRY CONTINUED

Recipes

Asian Chicken Salad (page 35), Asian-style Chicken (page 51), Chicken and Kabocha Soup (page 37), Chicken Fried Rice with Bok Choy (page 54), Chicken Tinola (page 38), Cranberry Chicken Salad (page 39), Fiesta Salad (page 40), Oyster Sauce Chicken and Broccoli (page 63), Pancit (page 64), and Skillet Pasta (page 68)

RICE

Rice is the staple food of more than half of the world's population. There are more than 100,000 different varieties of rice, but only a small number are sold in the United States. The more common rice varieties can be divided into long, medium, and short grain. The main difference is their cooking characteristics: the shorter the grain, the more moist and tender they cook. There are also different forms of rice and they vary in the amount they are processed. The common forms are: brown, milled white, parboiled, and precooked. Brown rice is the least processed form. It keeps the bran layers and has more fiber than milled white rice. Rice is a good source of carbohydrates. Brown rice is an excellent source of magnesium and a good source of dietary fiber and vitamin B6.

Buying

Buy the variety and form of rice to meet your preferences. Purchase appropriate amounts to avoid spoilage and food waste.

Storing

Uncooked milled, parboiled, or precooked rice will keep for 6 to 12 months on the shelf. Uncooked brown rice will keep for 3 to 6 months because of the oil in the bran layer. The oil in the bran will go rancid after a period of time. Store in a tightly closed container to keep out moisture, pests, and other contaminants. Place in a cool location or in the refrigerator or freezer for longer life.

Preparing

For best results, follow package directions. If desired, rinse the rice to remove possible debris. Brown rice can also be soaked for 30 minutes before cooking for a softer texture.

Recipes

Chicken Fried Rice with Bok Choy (page 54)

SEAFOOD

Seafood comes in different forms: fresh, frozen, or canned. It contains protein and other essential nutrients, is low in saturated fat, and some contain omega-3 fatty acids. A well-balanced diet that includes a variety of seafood can contribute to heart health and children's proper growth and development. However, nearly all seafood contains traces of mercury. Some fish and shellfish contain higher levels of mercury that may harm an unborn baby or young child's developing nervous system. Pregnant women and young children should avoid eating shark, king mackerel, swordfish, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury. Seafood choices higher in omega-3 fatty acids and lower in mercury are salmon, anchovies, sardines, Pacific oysters, trout, tilapia, shrimp, catfish, crab, and flounder.

SEAFOOD CONTINUED

Buying

It is important to purchase fresh fish and seafood from approved licensed stores, markets, and wholesalers. Buy fresh fish that is refrigerated or displayed on a thick bed of fresh ice (preferably in a case or under some type of cover). Avoid roadside stands.

Fresh fish can be bought whole, filleted, or as steaks. The fillets and steaks are a good choice for beginner cooks to prepare. A fillet is usually the entire side of a fish without the backbone. A fish steak is a section of a fish that includes a section of the backbone.

The color of a fish can be affected by several factors, including diet, environment, treatment with carbon monoxide or other packaging processes, so color alone is not a way to check for freshness. Fish should smell fresh and mild, not fishy, sour, or rotten. The flesh should spring back when pressed.

Whole fish should have firm flesh and red gills with no odor. A fish's eyes should be clear and shiny, not cloudy or sunken.

Fresh fillets and steaks should have firm flesh and red blood lines, or red flesh if fresh tuna. They shouldn't be discolored, dark, or dried around the edges. Prepackaged fillets and steaks should have a minimum of liquid in their trays. The quality decreases when stored in liquid.

Avoid packages with signs of frost or ice crystals, which may mean the fish has been stored a long time or thawed and refrozen. Don't buy frozen seafood if its package is open, torn, or crushed on the edges. When purchasing frozen fish, be sure that it isn't partially thawed. Whole fish, fillets, and steaks sold as "Previously Frozen" may not have all the characteristics of fresh fish (such as bright eyes, firm flesh, red gills, or bloodlines). However, they should still smell fresh and mild, not fishy, sour, or rotten.

Shellfish may be sold live, cooked, or fresh-shucked. Each type of shellfish has different things to check for when purchasing. The shells of live clams, oysters, or mussels should look moist and be tightly closed. If the shells are slightly open, tap them. If the shells do not close, do not purchase them. Do not buy live shellfish with cracked shells.

Storing

To refrigerate whole fish, drain and wrap well to keep the skin from drying out. Clean and cook on the day of purchase. Refrigerating fillets and steaks: rinse to remove loose scales or foreign matter. Pat dry with a paper towel, place on a clean pan or plate, cover with a plastic wrap, seal well, and refrigerate. Another option is to place the fillets and steaks in a clean plastic storage bag, seal well, letting out all air, and refrigerate. Raw fish should be kept in the refrigerator (40 °F or less) for only 1 or 2 days before cooking or freezing. After cooking, store seafood in the refrigerator for up to 3 to 4 days.

Any frozen fish or shellfish will be safe indefinitely if stored constantly at 0 °F. However, frozen raw fish is best used within 3 to 8 months, and frozen cooked fish within 3 months. The flavor and texture will lessen after lengthy storage. Proper packaging helps maintain quality and prevent freezer burn. Aluminum foil, freezer paper, air-tight plastic containers, and plastic freezer bags will help food maintain its best quality in the freezer. Plastic wrap alone will not provide enough protection by itself, but can be used to separate foods within another package. When packaging food, press out as much air as possible to prevent freezer burn, then wrap tightly.

Store commercially canned fish, such as tuna, up to 5 years in the pantry.

SEAFOOD CONTINUED

Preparing

For thawing fish and shellfish, follow the information for “Thawing” on page 8.

For healthier dishes, limit the amount of added oil or butter. To stretch seafood dishes, add vegetables, noodles, or rice.

See the “Internal Temperatures for Safe Cooking” table (page 6) in the “Safe Food Handling Guidelines” section.

Recipes

Fish Sinigang with Ung Choy (page 41), Guisadong Sayote (page 61), Kalo and Tuna Patties (page 62), Pinakbet (page 65), Somen Salad (page 42), Tuna Tofu Salad (page 44), and ‘Ulu Salad (page 47)

TOFU

Tofu is also known as soybean curd. Tofu is used a lot in Asian cooking. Tofu is considered a complete plant-based protein and may be substituted for meat. Firmer tofu contains more protein than softer varieties. Tofu can be a good source of calcium if it has a percent Daily Value of 10% or more.

Buying

There are two types of tofu: fresh and silken. Tofu is available in four forms: soft, medium, firm, and extra firm. Choose the type of tofu to use in your dishes based on the way it is prepared and how you want it to taste. For example, soft silken tofu is best for smoothies. Extra-firm tofu is good in baked or pan-fried recipes.

Fresh tofu is packed in water and available in the refrigerated section of many markets. Some silken tofu is also available in vacuum-packed containers and can be stored on the shelf in a cool place until opened. Refrigerate after opening.

Storing

Once opened, tofu should be kept in the refrigerator and covered with water. Tofu will keep for up to 3 to 4 days if the water is changed daily.

Preparing

Tofu has a mild taste and readily takes on the flavor of foods it is prepared with. It can be served cold or heated.

Recipes

Bok Choy with Tofu (page 53), Cold Ginger Tofu (page 57), Pork Tofu with Watercress (page 66), and Tuna Tofu Salad (page 44)

'UALA (SWEET POTATOES)

'Uala are most plentiful from February to June. They come in various skin and flesh colors. 'Uala is also known as Okinawan sweet potato, camote, kamuti, piteto tonal, chemutii, pedehde, and umala in different Pacific cultures. They can be used for main dishes, salads, as well as desserts. All parts of the 'uala plant (leaves, stems, and tuberous root) can be eaten. They are not related to potatoes, which have toxic leaves. 'Uala is an excellent source of vitamin A and a good source of fiber, some B vitamins, manganese, and potassium.

Buying

Purchase sweet potatoes that are firm, without soft spots, sprouts, cracks, holes, or discolorations. These could be openings for bacterial contamination and may not be food safe.

Storing

Sweet potatoes should be stored in a cool, dry place and used within a week or two. Do not store in the refrigerator.

Preparing

In general, the purple flesh sweet potatoes tend to be drier and are best steamed, boiled, or fried. Consider trying the "Rice Cooker 'Uala" recipe on page 67. The orange, yellow, or white flesh versions can be baked, roasted, or microwaved. All sweet potatoes are ready when they can be easily pierced with a fork. They can be prepared with or without the skin, depending on personal preference.

Recipes

Rice Cooker 'Uala (page 67), 'Uala Chips (page 87), 'Uala Fries (page 70), 'Uala Hash (page 71), 'Uala Hummus (page 88), 'Uala Mochi Balls (page 89), 'Uala Palau (page 90), and 'Uala Salad (page 45)

'ULU (BREADFRUIT)

'Ulu is typically in season from July to December. The fruit is always cooked before eating. It is also known as lemmai (seedless), dokdok (seeded), mai, mos, ma, meduu, mahi, and maai in different Pacific cultures. 'Ulu is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of potassium and fiber.

Buying

Immature 'ulu has not reached full size. It is bright green, and the skin has small raised bumps. It is rubbery and watery even when cooked, and doesn't have the same flavor and texture as mature fruit. An immature 'ulu will not mature or ripen after picking.

Mature 'ulu has yellowish-green skin and brownish outlines between the surface segments. The bumps are slightly flattened compared to the immature 'ulu. It is firm to the touch. The flesh inside is creamy white or pale yellow in color. If a potato-like consistency is desired, use the mature fruit.

A mature 'ulu will ripen and become soft in 1 to 3 days. Ripe 'ulu has yellowish-greenish-brown skin with a smooth surface. It is soft to the touch with a sweet fragrance and is perfect for sweet desserts.

'ULU (BREADFRUIT) CONTINUED

Storing

Mature 'ulu can be kept at room temperature to ripen. Ripe 'ulu is best used right away, although it can be kept in the refrigerator for a few days before using or stored in the freezer for later use. The skin will turn brown, but the edible flesh will stay firm.

Cooked 'ulu should be completely cooled to room temperature to avoid freezer burn when frozen. When using a plastic freezer bag, it can be stored for up to a year. Thawed 'ulu processed in this way holds its texture and flavor very well. Frozen 'ulu should be defrosted in the refrigerator.

Preparing

'Ulu contains a small amount of white sap which can stick to knives, pots, and steamers. Cutting off the stem immediately after harvest and letting the fruit sit stem-end down drains most of the sap. Sap issues can be reduced or eliminated by 1) choosing mature fruit, 2) refrigerating the fruit overnight (optional), and 3) soaking for 1 to 2 minutes in cold, clean water and scrubbing with a produce brush under running water.

Whole 'ulu can be steamed for about 50 to 60 minutes, but time may vary based on the size of the 'ulu. To reduce cooking time, 'ulu can be cut into quarters, but sap may be more of an issue.

'Ulu can also be baked in the oven for a tender and slightly roasted flavor. Cut the fruit in half and place cut-side down on an oiled baking pan with $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water. Whole 'ulu can also be wrapped in aluminum foil to keep the flesh moist. Bake at 375 °F– 400 °F for 1 hour, but cooking time varies depending on the size of the fruit.

Check if the 'ulu is easily pierced by poking into the flesh with a chopstick or fork. After the fruit is cooled, the skin can easily be cut off with a knife. If 'ulu is whole, cut in quarters and take out the core and the stem. Cut to the desired size. Sap that sticks to the pot can be removed with oil and a scrub brush, followed by washing with dish soap in hot water.

Recipes

'Ulu Chowder (page 46), 'Ulu Salad (page 47), and 'Ulu Wedges (page 72)

Source: Breadfruit Institute of the National Tropical Botanical Garden and Hawai'i Homegrown Food Network; Kōkua Hawai'i Foundation, 'AINA in Schools

VEGETABLES

A multicultural state like Hawai'i is fortunate to experience unique vegetables from different cultures. Vegetables are edible plant parts, such as leaves, stems, roots, and seeds, that may be purchased fresh, frozen, canned, or dried. Eating a variety of vegetables provides fiber and a range of vitamins and minerals, including potassium, folate, vitamin A, and vitamin C.

VEGETABLES CONTINUED

Buying

Vegetables can be bought fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or in juice form. Purchase fresh vegetables shortly before you plan to use them and buy only what you need. At the peak of their season, they are plentiful and prices are generally low. When buying fresh vegetables, choose those that are firm and fresh in color, without blemishes or soft spots. Avoid purchasing vegetables with bruises and mold.

Most frozen and canned vegetables are processed soon after harvesting to preserve their flavor and nutrients. Frozen and canned vegetables require little preparation, don't spoil, and can be used when the fresh version is not available. Choose ones without additional ingredients or sauces to minimize sodium and fat. Rinse canned vegetables under clean running water to reduce sodium.

Storing

Keep vegetables stored in the refrigerator or in a cool place. To prevent bacterial growth and spoilage, fresh vegetables should be stored unwashed and then rinsed just before eating. Once vegetables are cut, chopped, or cooked, they should be refrigerated in covered containers or plastic bags and consumed within 3 to 4 days. If they are to be frozen, store them in plastic freezer containers or bags.

If spoilage, such as damaged and decayed leaves, is seen on vegetables, remove them immediately to prevent additional spoilage.

Preparing

Before eating or preparing, wash fresh produce under cold running tap water to remove any dirt and bacteria, even if the outer skin might not be eaten. For leafy vegetables that don't have the "pre-washed", "triple-washed", or "ready to eat" label, separate individual leaves and rinse each one. For vegetables that grow in clusters, like broccoli and cauliflower, separate the clusters before rinsing. For waxy-skinned vegetables, like eggplants and bell peppers, rub the surface thoroughly under clean running water. For hard or thick-skinned vegetables, such as kabocha or sweet potatoes, the surface can be scrubbed with a produce brush under clean running water. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas because bacteria that cause illness can thrive in those places. Detergent, soap, bleach, and produce wash are not recommended for washing vegetables. They could be absorbed into the vegetables that you eat. For vegetables that are prepared for use later in the day, be sure to drain and pat dry with a paper towel and store in the refrigerator.

Recipes

Asian-style Chicken (page 51), Asian Chicken Salad (page 35), Bean Spread (page 77), Beef Tomato (page 52), Bok Choy with Tofu (page 53), Camote Salad (page 36), Chicken and Kabocha Soup (page 37), Chicken Fried Rice with Bok Choy (page 54), Chicken Tinola (page 38), Chow Fun (page 55), Choy Sum with Pork (page 56), Cold Ginger Tofu (page 57), Cranberry Chicken Salad (page 39), Eggplant with Garlic Sauce (page 58), Fiesta Salad (page 40), Fish Sinigang with Ung Choy (page 41), Gon Lo Mein (page 59), Green Beans and Won Bok Stir-Fry (page 60), Guisadong Sayote (page 61), Kalo and Tuna Patties (page 62), Oyster Sauce Chicken and Broccoli (page 63), Pancit (page 64), Pinakbet (page 65), Pineapple Salsa (page 84), Pork Tofu with Watercress (page 66), Skillet Pasta (page 68), Somen Salad (page 42), Sweet and Sour Beef (page 69), Three Bean Salad (page 43), Tuna Tofu Salad (page 44), 'Uala Hash (page 71), 'Uala Salad (page 45), 'Ulu Chowder (page 46), 'Ulu Salad (page 47), and Vegetable Namul (page 48)