

Store These In the Fridge



From the Fine Folks at Southern Living Magazine a feature on things you should refrigerate (but probably aren't) popped into my inbox. I found it very interesting. Even as a food writer I was failing at some of these.

What I'll do first up is give you their comments. Then I will make my own for each item.

Avocados

It's no secret that avocados can be a finicky fruit. One day ripe, the next day gone—and not a spoonful of guacamole to show for it. If you're holding onto a few avocados for weekend entertaining that aren't quite ready, pop them into your 'fresh produce' drawer to slow down their cycle significantly. Conversely, if you're ready to dive into some avocado toast before your little green friend is prepared to cooperate, leaving avocados by the kitchen window (while keeping a watchful eye!) can speed up the ripening process.

One of the things I miss from my 15 years of living in Chicago

is the dependable ripe avocado. I could find one any day of the week to make that last-minute guacamole. The Hispanic population in Chicago is impressive so the city goes through a lot of avocados and the grocery store never makes you wait for a ripe one. I hate it when I have to plan what I want to eat 6 days ahead.

As a young cook, I learned that if you want to speed up the ripening of the avocados you put them in a sealed paper bag on your counter.

Bananas

Similarly to the avocado, tossing a bunch of ripe bananas into the fridge will slow down the process to prevent it from over-ripening. The key is not to add them before they're ripe, or you'll run the risk of derailing the ripening process altogether, even once they are removed.

Around our house we don't even use a whole banana in our smoothie, so the ripe banana has been opened and a chunk removed. I try to remember to put it in the refrigerator after it's opened. A few weeks ago I forgot and got fruit flies!

Lemons and Limes

While showcasing lemons and limes in a pretty bowl on your counter can be tempting to achieve an air of put-together-ness, citrus fruits will last up to four times longer when stored in the refrigerator. If you absolutely must, simply opt to bring out your citrus centerpieces only when expecting guests.

I definitely have a fruit/vegetable bowl on my counter. Mine is a true piece of art. I have always kept my lemons and limes there. It's getting harder and harder to find ripe versions of these two fruits too. To make them juicier when I want to squeeze them, I learned to roll them under the palm of my hand on the counter.

Tortillas

While refrigerating loaves of bread can cause the inside to dry out and stale more quickly than you would predict (and present quite a challenge in slicing when it comes to a thick loaf such as sourdough), the opposite is true when it comes to a thinly sliced tortilla. Because of its thin quality, there's less opportunity for cold air to infiltrate empty pockets and dry it out. Because tortillas are prone to molding, tossing them in the refrigerator is always the safest bet—and can help them last up to twice as long.

I always keep tortillas in my refrigerator, but I bet you'll never guess why. I have a bread-stealing cat. I keep my bread in a cupboard and my tortillas in the fridge in the cheese drawer. If I don't, he'll chew open the package and have a field day. I find the results on my living room rug!

Natural Peanut Butter

If you've hopped on the natural peanut butter train for health purposes, you know that the last thing you want is to keep this specialty item from going the distance. Because natural peanut butter is truly peanut butter in its purest form (Think: peanuts and a dash of salt) with no preservatives to bind the

two together, it's common for separation to occur with the oils from the peanuts rising to the top. Because it's processed without preservatives, the oil is more susceptible to molding and it's always a safe bet to store it in a cool place.

Peanut butter disappears around our house so fast I've never had to think about this. My husband stores his natural peanut butter (always extra chunky) upside down so the oil is at the top of the jar. Stirs more easily that way. I did learn long ago to store it on a shelf that is higher up. If you have under-counter lights you don't want your peanut butter to be affected by the heat given off by the lights.

I like my peanut butter emulsified. I don't want that oil but I don't want sugar in it either. Some big-name companies are starting to figure that out and are making versions I like. Look for them. Just read the ingredients label and look for peanuts, oil, and salt only.

Cheers,