

# Ingredients

A few hints on picking ingredients:

**Asparagus** - The bottoms of the stalks should be green – no part of the stalk should be woody. The crowns should be a vivid purple, closed and compact.

**Broccoli** - Firm, compact groups of buds are a good sign. None of the buds should have begun to open yet (the flowers are yellow). Clusters should be green or green with purple.

**Cabbage** - Firm, heavier heads are good. Color should be good red or green – avoid yellowing or wilting leaves.

**Cantaloupe** - The skin is covered with a hatched pattern, with a yellowish cast. The tighter the hatches, the sweeter the cantaloupe.

**Chickens** - When buying a whole chicken, look for white skin. The yellow-skinned chickens were corn-fed, while white-skinned chickens were grain-fed. The damned Purdue people claim that corn-fed is better – but in fact the grain-fed are generally plumper and moister (this is the power of marketing, that a gullible public believes what the Purdue empire claims). Heavier chickens are better, because they have more fat and so will be kept moister when cooked. The skin should be tight to the meat. Yes, kosher chickens are better – something about smaller farms means that they were more likely freer rein and certainly not factory raised, and something about having a cleric come by once in a while to check on your business.... Butchers always try to sell the oldest meat first (well, duh), so tell the butcher that you want to see the chickens he's got in the back room and hasn't put out yet; he'll give you some grief and try to make you feel silly, but it is worth it. I have been advised that "gray-feathered chickens" are tastier and juicier, but I don't think that any of my local butchers have any clue from whence their chickens came....

**Cucumbers** - Green color, same color along the entire length. Narrow diameter is generally better, and firm over entire length.

**Eggplants** - Firm, heavy, smooth and uniformly colored eggplants are better.

**Fish** - Fresh fish have no smell! If it smells fishy, it is fishy, and don't buy it! The fish should look clean, and the colors vibrant. If the eyes are not clear (have a film over them) you have a problem fish and should put it back. The gills should be bright red inside. The skin of a fresh fish will bounce back if you press or pinch it. The market tends to run lower prices on fish that they are catching a lot of -- lower prices means a better chance of finding a good fish! For a fillet, the skin/scales on one side should stick firmly to the meat.

**Honeydew Melon** - The melons are riper and sweeter when a little softer. The flesh should give a little bit when squeezed, and there will be brown spots on the skin. In other words, you want the

melons that no one else will touch.

Mushrooms - The heads of better mushrooms tend to be closed or, if open, with pink or light tan gills. Mushrooms that are smaller for their variety are less likely to be overripe. Generally, the caps of better mushrooms will have a uniform color.

Parsnips - Better parsnips are small or medium width, without blemishes or decay.

Peaches - Better peaches are firm but softening. Color is good for a peach – avoid discolored peaches.

Pears - Better pears are firm but softening. Color and smooth skin is good on a pear -- avoid ones with brown or tan areas.

Peppers - Deep color, glossy sheen, heavy weight and firm walls are good signs.

Summer Squash / Zucchini - Skin is glossy, neither hard nor tough. Firm, smaller squash are better.

Fall / Winter Squash - Skin is hard on better squash. Heavier squash are more fully ripe.

Sweet Potatoes - Firmer sweet potatoes with firm skins are better.

Tomatoes - Firm, unbruised and uniformly colored tomatoes are better.

- [Subscriptions \(1\)](#)

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