Enhancing The Safety of Locally Grown Produce

Transporting Produce Safely

Getting fresh produce from the field to the market is another step where care must be taken to keep the product safe. It is important to prevent contamination of the produce with microorganisms that could cause foodborne illness and also to hold the produce under conditions that minimize the growth of harmful bacteria.

Steps to prevent contamination

- Use trucks or vehicles that have not been used to carry animals, raw manure, harmful chemicals or other contaminants, if possible.
- If you must use vehicles that carried animals, manure or harmful chemicals, then thoroughly wash, rinse and sanitize them before use with produce or other foods.
- Pack produce in covered containers to prevent contamination. Label produce in such a way that it can be traced to the specific area where it was processed and grown.
- Containers used to transport produce to market should be clean and sanitized. Food grade plastic containers are ideal. If using cardboard boxes, use only clean ones and use them only once. If using wooden bins or baskets, line them with a material like foil or paper towels that can be discarded after each use or with clean dish towels or fabric that can be laundered between uses.
- Pack produce carefully to prevent physical damage like bruises or cuts. Damaged areas can be entry points for microorganisms that cause disease or hasten spoilage.
- Ice used in the transport of produce should be made of water suitable for drinking and should be handled in a sanitary manner.
- Another option for cooling is freezer gel packs. Clean after each use and inspect for leakage.

▲ Use clean and sanitized containers with lids for transport of produce to market. Cooling produce will help maintain quality and prevent growth of bacteria.

▲ Using containers with lids helps to prevent exposure to contaminants during transport.

Courtesy of Robert Tate, UGA Horticulture Farm

Steps to minimize growth of harmful microorganisms

- Keep produce refrigerated or cooled to preserve best quality and to slow the growth of harmful bacteria.
- Transport products, especially leafy greens and shelled bean or peas, in clean and sanitized coolers with ice.
- If you have a refrigerated truck or trailer or a refrigeration unit, perform regular maintenance and check the temperature at least daily to ensure it is working properly.

▲ Use clean and sanitized containers with lids for transport of produce to market. Cooling produce will help maintain quality and prevent growth of bacteria.

Courtesy of Dr. Ben Chapman, North Carolina Cooperative Extension

▲ Use trucks or vehicles that have not been used to carry animals, raw manure, harmful chemicals or other contaminants, if possible. If you must use vehicles that have carried these, wash, rinse and sanitize between uses.

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