

Question answered: when is fruit ripe?

One of the things we get asked most often in our cooking classes is "how do you know when it's ripe, how are you supposed to store it..." and other fruit and vegetable-related questions. So, Gerry went to visit our good friend, Joe Scibilia, from the Georgetown Fruit Market to get all the answers.

1. Melons: to tell if melons are ripe; for watermelon— knock on it and it should sound like a bell. For honeydew and cantelope— press gently on the indent where the vine was attached and it should have some give to it. If it is rock hard— then don't buy that melon. Melons are picked ripe and although they get softer as they get older, they do not ripen off the vine.

2. Citrus: all citrus should feel heavy compared to its size. This means that it is full of juice. For oranges, really thick-skinned varieties

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are generally not very juicy. You are better off with medium skin or thin skin (navel oranges are generally medium skin thickness). The smoother the skin, the juicier the fruit as well.

3. Apples: for local apples, which are harvested in the fall, they are kept in cold storage until approximately January. They should be

firm, without bruises. Store them in the drawer of your fridge and only buy enough to last no more than a week at a time. During the months of February, March and April the local apples that are in the stores have been kept in a sealed, temperature controlled vault. Once removed from this storage, they do not last long and quickly go mealy and dry. So, during these months, buy your apples more frequently— only purchasing what you need to last a couple of days. During the summer months, it is basically impossible to find local apples, as they simply cannot be stored for that length of time. Look for imports until the fall.

4. Pears: are a softer fruit. Buy them firm and keep refrigerated. Take them out a few at a time to ripen. Set them in the fruit bowl at room temperature and they will take a couple of days to ripen up.

5. Mango: mangoes ripen after picking, so select one that has some give to it when you press gently on the skin. Rock hard ones will take a long time to ripen, or they may have been picked too green and they won't ripen at all.

6. Avocados: ripen after picking as well. The skin turns from a green colour to a black colour as the avocado ripens. It should feel almost as soft as a tomato when it is fully ripe. This generally takes 3-5 days at room temperature to happen. If you need to speed up the ripening process, then put the avocados in a paper bag with an extremely ripe banana and seal the bag. Leave at room temperature until the avocados are ready to use. Once ripe, don't cut into an avocado until you are ready to serve it as they go brown quickly.

We've got lots more great fruit and veg tips, so stay tuned for next week's article where we will continue the story!

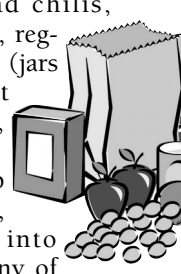
Have fun and keep cooking!

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Bread Basket has specific grocery list

The Georgetown Bread Basket (food bank) is running low on the following items: canned pasta, canned stews and chilis, skim milk powder, regular tea, baby food (jars of fruit) and fruit juice, vegetables, and cereal boxes.

If you can help with these items, please put them into the drop box at any of the grocery stores and food bank volunteers will pick them up, or drop off your donation at The Georgetown Bread Basket at 55 Sinclair Ave., Unit 12 on Wednesdays or Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.



Upcoming fundraising community dinners

Friday, May 23

Roast Beef dinner will be held 6 p.m. at St. John's Anglican Church, corner of 15 Sideroad and Trafalgar Rd. in Stewarttown. Adults \$12.50 and children \$6. For tickets call Joan, 905-877-5797.

Saturday, May 31

Norval United Church hosts its 42nd annual chicken barbecue, 4-8 p.m. at the Huttonville Public School (2322 Embleton Rd. between Heritage Rd. and Mississauga Rd.). Everyone welcome; lots of live entertainment. For tickets or more information please call 905-867-2381; www.norvalunited.ca

Zucchini and Potato Latkes

Ingredients

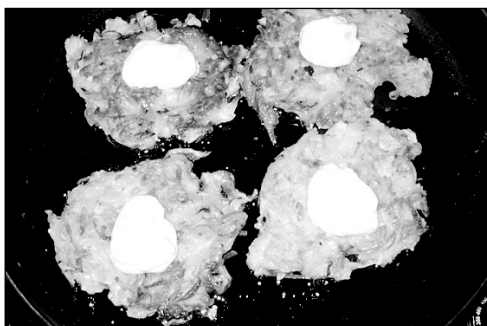
- 1 small zucchini, grated, not peeled
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and grated
- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup flour
- 2 tbsp grated onion
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp coarse or kosher salt
- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- vegetable oil for frying

Method

Mix all ingredients together

In frying pan, just cover the bottom of pan with vegetable oil. Heat to medium high.

Spoon approximately one-third cup batter for each latke into oil and flatten slightly. They should be irregular looking and not perfectly round.



Cook on one side over medium heat about 5 minutes until crisp and golden.

Turn each one over and fry other side until crisp and golden also. Drain on paper towels before serving. Delicious served with a dollop of sour cream.

These can be prepared ahead, but don't add potatoes until ready to use or they will turn brown.



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