Types of fruit and vegetables

Different kinds of fruit and vegetable have different shapes, colours, texture and flavour

The leaves of an Iceberg lettuce, a Romaine lettuce, or a Trocadero or Mantecosa are quite different. These differences affect how long they keep in the refrigerator, and are especially important in preparing a salad. “When you talk about lettuce, think salad,” was a friend’s advice to a grower. The message highlighted that today’s vegetable buyers have their own culture and look at foods from the standpoint of how they fit in with their recipes rather than the original properties of the species or variety.

People want to know more about food, and especially about chefs’ recipes and techniques. Chefs and modern catering enterprises are the new opinion formers in all things culinary, and are aware of the value of having the public know about food. Not all fruit and vegetable products are by any means the same: the differences are in fact very considerable.

In this fourth edition of the second period of the Guide to the Best Fruit and Vegetables, as in earlier editions, participating companies and organizations highlight what makes their brands distinctive in terms of source, designation, post-harvest processes and preparation for sale. Some differences have to do with the specific variety, even within one and the same species. We list some of these key differences below:
AUBERGINE

An aubergine is a fruit of up to 30 cm length, round, oblong or elongated in shape, with a smooth shiny skin varying in colour from white to purple, green, black yellow and red: the commonest colour on ripening is purple, and some varieties are streaked white or purple.

Most aubergines in the market are elongated or round. Not all taste the same: cultivar developers at seed companies assert that some varieties are sweet while others have a bitter touch.

Aubergine is never eaten raw, always cooked. Many countries have a typical aubergine-based dish; Spain, for instance, has xamfaina, escalivada and espencat, where aubergine is coupled...
with peppers, Italy has capotana, the Greeks have moussaka, and Turkey has imam bayildi. The best-known aubergine dish is the French ratatouille.

Aubergine is roast or sautéed, but not boiled; it is typically stuffed with a filling. To steam aubergine, slice it and sprinkle with salt to trigger a process of osmosis that will expel the bitter-tasting compounds and enhance the pleasant taste lent by the insoluble substances.

**COURGETTE**

Courgette – also known as zucchini – is one of the two varieties of Cucurbita pepo. Today it is widely grown throughout Europe as “summer squash”.

The large yellow flowers are much sought-after by high-end chefs.

Depending on the variety, the size can differ widely. The rind is smooth and hard, and also varies in colour.

Like other Cucurbitaceae species, Cucurbita pepo is readily crossed with cognate species, leading to frequent confusion among the many hybrids that vary in colour and size.

Some courgettes are even sold for decorative purposes.
Some courgettes have surprising shapes. They are sometimes used as decoration, in flower arrangements or as Halloween props.
## LETTUCE

### Salads

Popular lettuce varieties include Iceberg, Romaine and Trocadero.

Iceberg, with its dense, tight head like a cabbage, is almost devoid of savour, but is widely recognised for its crunchy texture and ease of fine slicing – it has been the most popular lettuce variety for many years in North America. Romaine lettuces have a long head, with thick, crunchy, spear-like leaves; a very characteristic winter sub-variety in Spain is Oreja de Mulo, “mule's ear”.

France’s most popular lettuce is Trocadero, with a round head, fine leaves, a buttery texture and a delicate but intense flavour. Batavia is similar, and has that same buttery texture, but the head is looser and the leaves are curled.

Oak-Leaf lettuce, with its curled, distinctively purple leaves and loose head, is not a variety of *L. sativa* but a separate species, *Chicorium intybus*. Consumers are increasingly unaware of the available lettuce varieties, while commercial market gardens constantly innovate, introducing new cultivars with different shapes, appealing colours and more daring flavours. Today’s lettuce growers have set up IV Gamma minimal processing facilities to offer washed, bagged salad leaves to supermarkets and greengrocer’s, thus making salads an attractive, modern, healthy convenience food.

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**Photograph: Rijk Zwaan**

**Photograph: Ramiro Arnedo**

**Cogollos de Tudela or Little Gem lettuces** are baby Romaine lettuces

Photograph: Ramiro Arnedo
WILD MUSHROOMS

Edible wild mushrooms are not a market garden crop but, from a commercial standpoint, can be regarded as a vegetable. Examples include the button mushroom, Amanita ponderosa, saffron milk cap, parasol and Caesar’s mushroom (ou de reig in Catalan).

CABBAGES

Brassicas

The botanical genus Brassica includes cabbages, broccoli and cauliflower. Most commercial varieties are of the Brassica oleracea species, and hence have many common features despite their different appearance. Chinese cabbage, however, belongs to a different species – Brassica rapa pekinensis.

Cauliflower and broccoli are the immature inflorescences or “flower heads” of the cabbage plant; other cabbages are grown for their leaves and occasionally the stalk. Some cabbages grow as compact heads around a central bud – these kinds are known in Spanish as repollo – while other looser varieties are used for their individual leaves. Leaf cabbages embrace a broad group of varieties which have been grown in almost
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Brussels sprout
Photograph: Bejo

Milan or Savoy cabbage
Photograph: Bejo

White cabbage

The whole of Europe for centuries, chiefly for use in soups and stocks, and also formerly used to feed farm animals to improve their meat. Though a winter vegetable in origin, the numerous cultivars of cabbage around the world ensure that Brassica species are available the year round.

Their nutritional composition has common characteristics, though some varieties are distinctive. Brasses contain organic compounds known as glucosinolates. These are secondary metabolites that contain sulphur and nitrogen. Their by-products serve plants as natural pesticides, and they lend cabbage its bitter or acidic taste. They have valuable health properties, such as helping to prevent cancer. Cabbages are also low-calorie foods.

Cabbages can cause flatulence or heavy digestion owing to its fibre content and sulphur compounds, but this effect is mitigated by cooking it with cumin or fennel. These drawbacks are amply made up for by the health benefits.

Cabbage can be steamed, baked, fried, stewed, boiled or grilled, or used
in soups and casseroles. With some exceptions, it can also be eaten raw in a salad.

The most commercially widespread Brassica oleracea varieties are: broccoli, cauliflower, white or Savoy cabbage, Milan cabbage, red cabbage, Brussels sprout, and kohlrabi; Chinese cabbage or bok choi, Brassica rapa pekinensis, is also common.

Broccoli, Brassica oleracea var italic, originated somewhere in northwest Europe. Its flower heads range from dark green to bluish or purple, and are more open and uneven in shape than cauliflower. Broccoli is steamed, grilled or eaten raw with dips or cheeses.

Demand for broccoli is constantly on the rise owing to increasing awareness of its properties as a healthy and nutritious food and its powerful protection against cancer, attributable to its sulphuraphane content deriving from its glucosinolate compounds. It is low-calorie and has a pleasant flavour. It is high in fibre and rich in minerals such as potassium and calcium, and contains vitamins A, C and E. Broccoli consumption also supports cardiovascular health and nervous function.

Cauliflower, Brassica oleracea var botrytis, is a very ancient crop originating in Asia. It originated botanically from broccoli, of which it is a variety. Its large round white flower head is more compact than broccoli and keeps for longer. It is high in fibre and potassium and low in sodium, which makes it a suitable diuretic for people with high blood pressure. Cauliflower is more easily digested than other cabbage varieties.

Cabbages are vegetables that have formed part of the human diet since ancient times. They were grown by the Egyptians and regarded as medicinal. They are usually eaten cooked in some form, but now also used raw in salads. Fermentation of cabbage in a salt solution to make sauerkraut is a process that preserves the nutritional and nutraceutical properties of cabbage and makes it more digestible. Round cabbages are the most popular kind, with an energy content of 24 to 28 kcal per 100 g of fresh product.

White cabbage, Brassica oleracea var capitata alba, has a round or oblong cabbage head with tightly bound leaves. The more compact the cabbage head, the better, because the inner leaves are then whiter, more tender and more succulent. The white cabbage is thought to have
Red cabbage, Brassica oleracea var capitata rubra, originated in southern Europe. Red cabbage is highly prized for its slightly sweet taste; its leaves are an attractive purple. It is prepared in the same way as other cabbage varieties. The main difference is that it contains anthocyanines which account for its colour; they are destroyed by cooking, but are retained when the cabbage is prepared as a preserve.

The generally smooth leaves are tightly bound into a flattened, cylindrical, spherical or oval cabbage head. In the northern hemisphere cooked red cabbage is a staple of Christmas meals.

Sweetheart or pointed cabbage, Brassica oleracea var capitata, has a compact head that tapers to a point. It has excellent flavour and offers the same properties as other cabbages.

Brussels sprouts are in fact the axillary buds of the cabbage Brassica oleracea var gemmifera. They form tight, almost perfectly round cabbage hearts of up to 4 cm in diameter. They originated in Belgium as a variant of curled cabbage. They are only consumed cooked. Brussels sprouts contain the glucosinolate sinigrine, which prevents the growth of precancerous cells.

Kohlrabi, Brassica oleracea var gongylodes, originated in northeast Europe, is consumed chiefly in northern Europe and is not commonly found elsewhere. The thick stalk is reminiscent of turnip in its shape and flavour. Kohlrabi can be white, green or red, and is cooked in soups or used in salads, lending a piquant taste. The leaves are usable like those of other cabbages, but are not the main purpose of kohlrabi cultivation.
Kohlrabi is available mainly in autumn and winter, although in Nordic countries, where it is greatly prized, it is available practically all year.

Chinese cabbage, Brassica pekinensis, originated in China. Widespread in Asia since ancient times, it has recently become a part of the western diet. The best known kinds are pe-tsai, which a long-leaved head similar to lettuce, and pak-choi, with more open leaves reminiscent of Swiss chard. It is a delicate product that requires careful handling. It is a rich source of minerals, vitamins and fibre. Chinese cabbage can be grown all year due to their being several different varieties, and it is thus available in all seasons. Chinese cabbage consumption supports cardiovascular health and digestive function and helps prevent constipation and high blood pressure.

The Brassicaceae genus comprises cabbages, broccoli, cauliflower and kohlrabi. See the vegetable subject index.

**STRAWBERRY**

The strawberry varieties cultivated nowadays for commercial purposes are usually hybrids of Fragaria x ananassa, yielding large, high-quality fruits, which has almost wholly replaced the smaller-fruiting wild species, Fragaria vesca.

The low sugar content of strawberry makes it a good dieting food. It is commonly eaten on its own or with sugar, sugar and wine, sugar and cream, in ice cream or jam, or as a popular ingredient in pastries, cakes and tarts, the bright red colour lending a special decorative touch. Strawberry is also the basis for a liqueur.

Spanish strawberry, known as fresón, is typically the Californian variety, with large, flavoursome fruits, and harvested early, from February to May. Summer strawberries, with their delicate flavour, are the customary produce of France and Germany, while in North America Californian strawberries are available all year - the same happens in Europe, but the strawberries are of different varieties in each season.

Different strawberry varieties make for different sizes. The largest are the Californian varieties; others are elongated, and others have a distinctive flavour.

Photograph: Planasa
WATERMELON

The watermelon, Citrullus lanatus or vulgaris, is traditionally a very large peponid — the record is 79 kg — that is highly prized all around the world.

Some years ago the fruit was invariably very large. It is fleshy and juicy, with over 90% water content and a mass of seeds. The pulp is red owing to the antioxidant lycopene, also present in tomato, and generally sweet (and, more rarely, yellow and bitter). It is much thought of for being refreshing and rich in water and minerals, and its low calorie content make it suitable for dieting. The vitamin E-rich seeds are used as a folk remedy, roast as a snack or, in Mexico, used raw to prepare a kind of refreshing drink.

Today’s most popular watermelons are seedless, and brands are available offering quality well beyond the standard. Some new varieties are small enough to “fit in the fridge” — under 2 kg — and others have differently coloured pulp, so that you can get ready an appealing salad with red, white and yellow watermelon chunks.
Melons vary in shape from spherical to elliptic, and “banana” melons have ribs that make them look like pumpkins; their size, too, depends on the variety and growing conditions, and can range from as little as 400 g to as much as 20 kg or more. The commonest varieties generally vary from somewhat over half a kilogram to just under five kilograms.

The colour of the rind and pulp differs by variety: the rind can be white, grey, greenish or yellow, and of a smooth, rough or reticulate texture. The pulp is fragrant and has a smooth texture, and,
again, varies in hue: yellow, green, pink, and all shades in between. The inner cavity contains a mass of seeds coated in a sticky jelly.

The different varieties and sub-varieties of melon vary widely in appearance, properties and method of cultivation. The most widespread include Charentais, Cantaloupe, Italian Cnataoupe, Western Shipper, Eastern Shipper, Yellow, Piel de Sapo, Honey Dew, Tendral, Ananas, Galia, Crenshaw and Japanese Earl.

In the UK, yellow melon is called “honeydew” for its sweetness and smell; the variety is also popular in North America. Its rind is almost white and the flesh is pale green.

The most popular melon varieties in Spain are Piel de Sapo, Pinyonet and Tendral.
**GREEN BEAN**

The green bean is the unripe fruit of Phaseolus vulgaris and other Phaseolus species. It goes by many names in Spanish, depending on the area of Spain or Latin America: ejote (Mexico), chaucha (Argentina and Uruguay), judía verde (Spain), alubias verdes (Castile), bajocas (east coast of Spain), vainas (northern Spain), habichuelas tiernas, or simply habichuelas (Andalucía and the Canary Islands), porotos verdes (Chile) and vainitas (Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela).

It is a long, flat pod containing seeds - the number varies by species. The walls of the pod harden as it ripens by forming fibrous tissue, but while it remains unripe the pod is edible as a vegetable.

The commonest kinds have round, fleshy pods or flat pods, and some bear long pink streaks. Flat-pod beans go by a wide range of commercial names in Spain - perona, garrafal oro, helda, or the varietal name given by the grower. Round-pod beans have undergone much selective improvement given their role in the world market as the standard tinned and frozen bean.
PEPPERS

There is a huge variety of different peppers used for different culinary purposes. The photographs illustrating this column are sourced from a chapter of Pimientos, by Jaime Urrios and Jorge Aguilar. Greengrocer's commonly stock the following kinds of peppers:

Long fleshy Lamuyo or Largo de Reus peppers, 4 to 8 mm thick. Cooks roast them to make Catalan escalibada or Valencian esgarraet.

California peppers are square, foreshortened, and have thick fleshy walls, and by degree of ripeness their colour ranges through green to red, yellow, orange and purple.

Sweet Italian peppers are sometimes known as “frying” peppers, but they are mild-flavoured and perfectly suitable for salads.

Some peppers are hot, such as Padrón, from the village of the same name in Galicia, Najerano, Majorca peppers, Anaheim, the large Bulgarian green pepper, the medium-length Asian peppers – Jwala, Keriting – the shiny yellow Hungarian variety and Guajillo.
José María Torres, an executive of the Spanish fruit and vegetable group Anecoop, has devised a simple and modern classification of tomato, the world’s most widely consumed vegetable.

Round red. Green, ribbed. The tomato has a green neck and ripens from green to red, sometimes passing through a pink or orange stage. The best-known variety is Marmande, which comprises a wide spectrum of sub-varieties and geographical sources.

On the vine. The vine is cut from the plant once the fruit is ripe.

Pear tomato. Often called “preserve tomato” because country households used to use them for preserves, and now the food industry used pear tomatoes to manufacture tomato sauces and purées, tinned tomatoes, etc. But some delicious, highly regarded pear tomatoes, such as the Italian San Marzano, are also used fresh.

Cherry tomato. Good for snacking on anytime, anywhere, in a salad or cooked or any way you please. There are
now different colours and shapes - date, lightbulb, etc.

Tinned tomatoes have all kinds of culinary uses, and the modern food industry also uses large amounts of tomato powder. Whole sun-dried tomatoes have become popular in the shops.

Pictured: cherry tomatoes, pear tomatoes, beef tomatoes, furrowed tomatoes, round and smooth tomatoes termed "Canarias"

Ribbed tomatoes for salad
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CITRUS FRUITS

Satsuma
A fair-sized fruit, easily peeled, salmon-orange in colour. The pulp is a bright orange, containing a large amount of juice, acidity being low. Seedless.

Bears Lime
Small fruit, greenish-yellow in colour. Its greenish-yellow pulp is very juicy, fragrant and acidic. Seedless. Picked from September onwards, when the peel is still green.

Lemon
A fair-sized oval fruit, with a thick, slightly rough yellow peel. The pulp contains a large amount of highly acidic juice. Small number of pips.

Clemenules
Also known as “tangerine of Nules” and “queen tangerine”.
A fair-sized fruit, orange in colour. Contains a sufficient amount of high-quality juice. The pulp is tender and melting. Seedless.

Grapefruit
Large globular, flattened or pear-shaped fruit. The thick peel is yellow or yellow with hints of red. The pulp is yellow to bright reddish. Seedless, or a very few pips. The juice varies from sweet to bitter and acidic.

Washington Navel
A large, rounded or slightly flattened fruit, bright orange in colour, with a slightly rough peel. The pulp has excellent organoleptic properties. Seedless.
Sanguinelli
An ellipsoid fruit, with a thin, shiny orange peel with areas of very bright red. The juicy pulp is bright red. The juice is purplish-red, and very fragrant and pleasant. Small number of pips.

Valencia Late
A medium to large orange fruit, ellipsoidal to spherical in shape. The peel is thin and smooth. The pulp is orange, containing a large amount of juice with excellent fragrance and a slightly acidic taste. Almost seedless.

Nova
A fair-sized fruit, with a highly attractive bright reddish-orange colour. The peel adheres closely to the segments and can be removed only with some difficulty. The pulp is tender and melting and contains a large amount of highly acidic juice. Seedless.
Sweet Fruit

**APPLE**

**Golden Delicious**
This is the variety best known to consumers for its characteristic yellow colour and sweet taste.

**Red Chief®**
A variety of the Red Delicious group that stands out for its bright red colour.

**Mondial Gala®**
One of the most widespread clones of the Gala group, although there are now more brightly coloured strains in existence. All varieties in the group are distinctive for their sweet, fragrant taste.

**Granny Smith**
A benchmark variety characterised by its typical green colour and acidic taste.

**Fuji**
A late-harvested variety with high flavour quality, sweet taste and a juicy, crunchy texture. The photograph shows an apple of the Kiku®8 striated-colour variety.

**Reineta Gris del Canada**
An old variety grown in most areas of Spain. This pulp is acidic, firm and ideal for culinary uses.

**Pink Lady®**
The first variety launched using the club formula in Europe. It is harvested very late and is characterised by its pink colour, very firm pulp and balance of sweet and acidic flavour.
PEAR

Ercolini
A summer-harvested variety with high quality juicy pulp.

Limonera
One of the most widely known pear varieties, with a firm, slightly grainy pulp and a distinctive shape. Turns yellow on ripening.

Blanquilla
The best known summer variety and one of the most widely consumed. The pulp is delicate, juicy, sweet and of high gustatory quality.

Conference
With Blanquilla, one of the two main pear varieties in Spain. Distinctive for its bronze-green colour and offering high gustatory quality.

Williams
A variety grown both for the canning industry and to be consumed fresh, its pulp is typically fragrant.
PEACH AND NECTARINE

Rich Lady®
A peach variety with yellow pulp and slightly acidic taste. Like other new varieties, it has a brightly coloured skin and an absence of down.

Sweet Love®
A peach variety with white pulp, sweet taste and bright colouring; harvested in late July.

Big Top®
A nectarine variety with yellow pulp, sweet taste and bright colouring; harvested in early July. Very well-received by consumers.

Garaco®
An early-harvested variety with white pulp, good colouring and balanced taste.

Ufo-3
A flattened or paraguayo peach variety with white pulp and sweet taste.

Mesembrine®
A flattened nectarine variety with yellow pulp and sweet taste; harvested in mid-July. Its flattened shape and absence of down make it easy to eat.

Summersun®
An early-harvested durazno or pavia peach with high gustatory quality and the yellow colouring typical of the variety.

Ignasi Iglesias
Institut de Recerca i Tecnologies Agroalimentaries (I.R.T.A.)
Generalitat de Catalunya
Type of Fruits and Vegetables
Pere Papasseit
Teresa Barbat
Information about companies
and about the Fruit&Veg Project