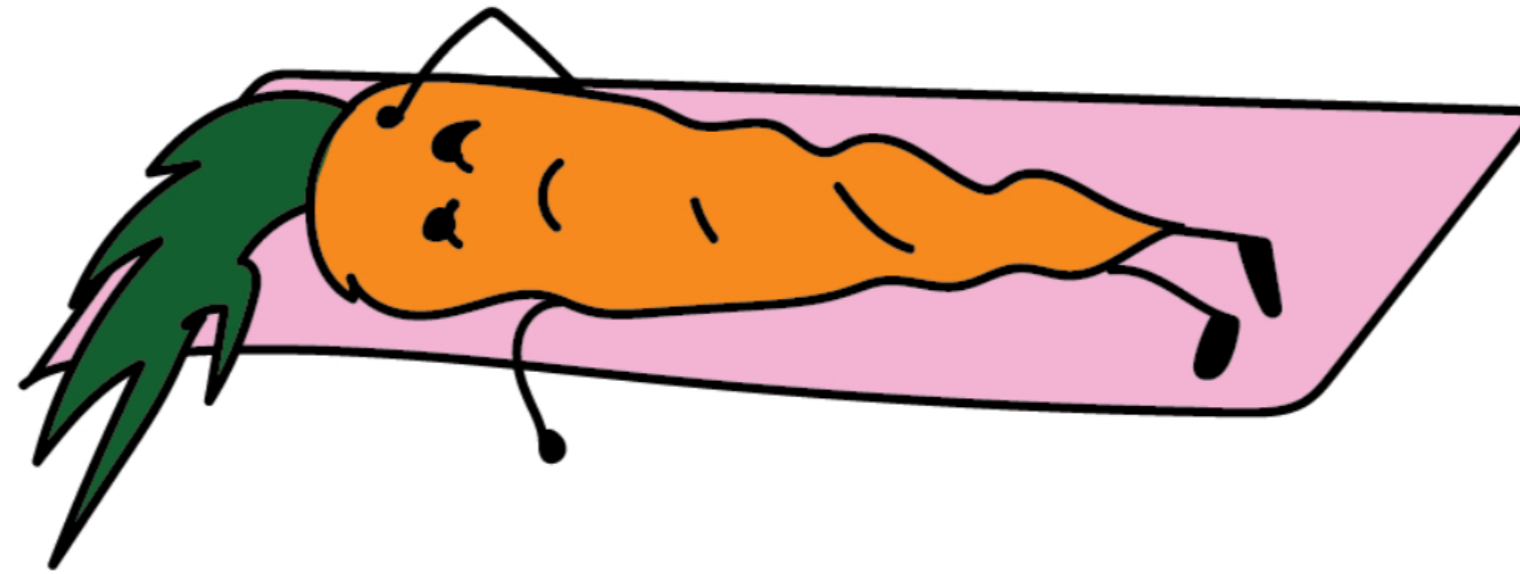


clover food lab

Happy Food Waste Friday, where we talk about ways to shop and store and eat food so it stays yummy and lasts a good long time.

If the Veggie Monster is passionate about destroying anything, it's food waste. And that's why today we're talking about a secret battle quietly playing itself out all over your refrigerator and pantry. Night and day. Day and night. Midafternoon even! Fruit against fruit. Vegetable against vegetable.

It's the Great Ethylene War.



Ethylene-sensitive carrot in repose

Ethylene is a hormone that plants (aka veggies & fruits) naturally emit as a gas. It causes some great things—fruits get sweeter and softer—but it also makes cells break down, causes peels to go yellow and brown, and reduces once fine, upstanding greens to limp green dishrags.

And this, my friends, is the root of the **Great Ethylene War**. Most vegetables have **STRONG** feelings about ethylene. Some of them are **Ethylene Producers**: bananas, apples, peaches, pears, melons, tomatoes, avocados. They LOVE the stuff. Picture one of those automatic air fresheners spritzing out a mist every few minutes. SSSPPPPP. SPPPPP. SPPPPP. That's ethylene raining down on you, you Banana.

Then there are the **Ethylene Sensitives**. Poor things. Carrots, broccoli, lettuce, cucumbers, celery. Cabbage! (Don't be fooled by Cabbage's tough guy act. Inside, an Ethylene Sensitive lurks.) If you've ever picked up a week-old carrot to find it rubbery and tired, now you know it's not Carrot's fault. It's Ethylene's!

And if we're being honest, it's not all endless ethylene parties for the Producers either. The fruits—most of them are fruits—release the ethylene to begin their own ripening, so their clocks are ticking too. Anyone who loves a ripe nectarine or and peach knows the game: you need them to be just the right amount of soft or the flavor and texture is going to be all off.

When a Producer and a Sensitive are sitting side by side, it's a silent but fierce Battle Royale. The Producer's emissions are hastening the dreaded Wilt and Droop* that make the garbage disposal an inevitable resting place for that tortured Sensitive soul.

So here's your big rule of thumb for today: **to reduce your food waste—and keep your fruits and veggies at Peak Tasty:**

- **IDENTIFY** whether they are **Ethylene Producers** or **Ethylene Sensitives**, and then
- **SEPARATE THEM** before you
- **STORE THEM.**

Separate drawers, separate bags, separate shelves in the fridge. Separate cities, if you have to. This will let the Producers ripen away and keep the Sensitives going at their own pace.

One exception is the counter: If EPs and ESs are mixed out on the kitchen counter, the separation doesn't need to be extreme because the natural airflow of your kitchen will help disperse the ethylene. One less thing to worry about!

To help with the IDENTIFICATION step, here's a list of popular Producers and Sensitives:

ETHYLENE PRODUCERS:

Apple
Banana
Apricots
Peach
Nectarine
Pear
Prune
Mango
Kiwi
Fig
Tomato
Avocado
Guava

Our beloved Paw Paw

ETHYLENE SENSITIVES:

Broccoli
Cauliflower
Cabbage
Corn
Rhubarb
Leeks
Oranges
Asparagus
Zucchini
Potatoes
Onions
Garlic
Shallot



And if you don't see a favorite fruit or veg on the list above—chili peppers, eggplants, lemons, limes, beets, turnips, grapes, mushrooms, parsnips, radishes, ginger, watermelon—that's because they do pretty well hanging out with either the EPs or the ESs. Think of them as Switzerland.

Have a great weekend of IDing, Separating, and Storing!

*Note from Kiernan: I've always thought "Wilt" and "Droop" are top notch dog names.

