

What would you suggest to make strawberries last longer after I buy them?

Probably the biggest key to maintaining strawberries for as long as possible is what you buy or pick out in the first place. There are several points important to selecting strawberries with good prospects of storing well.

Selection: When selecting strawberries for purchase, be sure to inspect the carton, basket or clamshell as much as possible to look for overripe fruit, rotten fruit and stains of fruit juice at the bottom or sides of the container. Overripe fruit are prone to rot quickly and can taste bad. It should be pointed out that fruit from farmer's markets tends to be very mature for better flavor, but this also can result in a shorter storage life. Rotten fruit, which may have some brown discoloration of the fruit or outright fungal growth, will quickly infest other fruit in the container with fungus, especially if the fruit are not in the refrigerator. Stains of fruit juice at the bottom and sides of the container are signs of damaged fruit. Damaged fruit are not attractive, and worse are easily invaded by fungi and will quickly rot.

Storage: Strawberries should be cooled as quickly as possible. Studies done at UC Davis demonstrate that strawberries significantly lose storage life for each hour they are outside. Strawberries stored out in the open, especially out in the sun, are particularly prone to overheating and near immediate loss in storage quality. Additionally, buyers should be aware that fruit in the fall has a much higher chance of becoming rotten, because of the accumulation of disease inoculum in the field over the fruiting season.

Moisture: Surface moisture, like rain or dew, on strawberry fruit is a guarantee of a rapid reduction in storage quality. Not only does moisture on the surface of the fruit damage it, but it also facilitates the movement and activities of fruit rot organisms. Buyers should avoid strawberry fruit with obvious moisture if at all possible.

The above has been a brief guide to selecting and maintaining fresh strawberry fruit for purchase. Please contact Mark Bolda at UCCE Santa Cruz if you have more questions on this topic or any other topics concerning blackberry, raspberry or strawberry production.