

HOW TO CHECK YOUR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES EFFECTIVELY

Produce is, of course, naturally kosher, however, in its natural growing environment, it is subject to attracting many types of insects.

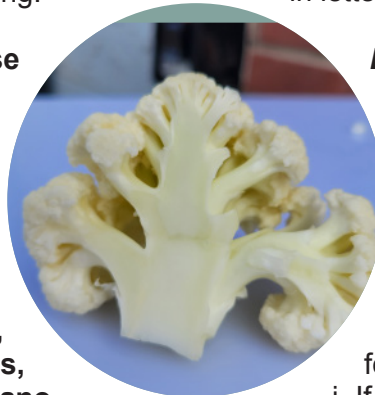
There are three main levels to be aware of when using produce. 1) Commonly infested produce – such as kale, 2) Commonly found though not always – such as in cabbage, or 3) Not commonly found such as apples, carrots, or even white asparagus.

- Once we know produce can normally have insects, we must check it to make sure it is clean. Prior to checking one should wash it to come out with optimal results.
- Any organic produce naturally has a greater level of infestation, as pesticides are only minimally or not at all used.
- Triple washed produce has also been found to commonly have insects.
- Frozen or canned broccoli, artichoke hearts, or anything prone to infestation is therefore required to come with a very reliable Hashgacha that testifies upon the product being clean.
- Even items that normally never have any infestation, can be subject to issue and vary from season to season or are subject to climate, storage, and/or quality not being optimal. So as we like saying, “even if it does not require checking, always keep your eyes open when eating.”

The following produce requires these two steps before use.

A) Cleaning and B) Checking:

A) *Cleaning* of leafy vegetables (non-organic): Romaine hearts, bok choy, kale, butterhead lettuce, spring mix, arugula, little gem lettuce, iceberg lettuce, cilantro, frisee lettuce, mint, shiso oba leaves, nasturtium leaves, carrageen leaves, parsley, basil, dill, baby kale, oregano, hydro mache, red vein sorrel, rosemary, and spinach:



- a. Prepare a basin with water and dissolve a non-toxic dishwashing soap until the water feels slippery. (Seventh Generation brand is preferred)
- b. Break apart leaves into the basin, agitate well, and soak for two minutes.
- c. Do not overload basin, as the leaves should be able to move freely. We do not recommend use of a bucket.
- d. Remove leaves and shake off water, and if washing the leaves whole, remove each leaf from the basin and rinse under running tap water – not a water sprayer – making sure the water flow goes into folds of leaves. Then place into a second basin.
- e. **Checking** can now be done as described below in letter B)

a. *Cleaning* of Broccoli and Cauliflower

(non-organic): (colored cauliflower requires extra care)

- b. Break into small florets.
- c. Soak in warm/hot soapy water for at least ten minutes.
- d. Agitate thoroughly. Do not overload basin, as the florets should be able to move freely.
- e. Take each floret in an upright position (florets up, stems down) and place under running tap water while rubbing and opening the tops with your fingers (thumbs work best) so that water can flow through. Shake off excess water downward (toward the stem) and then put into a second basin.
- f. Checking now to be done as described below in letter B)

B) *Checking*:

- g. Fill the second basin containing the produce with water. Agitate and let soak for a couple of minutes.
 - h. Pour the water carefully through a thrip cloth sandwiched in between two colanders.
 - i. Remove thrip cloth by holding all four corners and check over a lightbox for any insects.
 - j. If no insects are found, then produce can be immediately used.
- If one insect is found, rinse again and then check

a second time.

If more than one insect is found, then repeat cleaning method above and then check.

If unsure if a speck on the cloth is an insect, a loupe should be used to help identify it. If it still cannot be determined if it is a bug, the produce is passable.



notice white scales on the skin, they should be removed. Organic blueberries require checking in crown.

Produce may be checked a maximum of three times. If insects are still found after the third check, the produce should be discarded and cannot be used at all, even for juicing, blending, or grinding, as produce that is known to be infested, cannot be used, even for juicing, blending, or grinding. Any sign in any produce of holes or trails means it is where insects have been; even if currently no insect is visible, it must be removed and not used.



The following produce requires the following procedures:

Asparagus - White can be rinsed well and used without checking. **Green or purple** – The heads (starting from the **florets**) must be removed. Remove the side triangular leaves on stem (easiest to use a peeler).

Artichoke – bottoms can be used. Hearts are commonly infested, and extreme care is necessary to ensure that they are usable. It should be noted that currently there are no commercially sold artichoke hearts that come with a reliable *hashgacha*.

Blackberries – Cannot be used as it is common to have thrips burrowed inside.

Blackeye beans – infestation ranges between seasons and brands, however, they are not commonly infested. One should check small handfuls at a time looking for holes, which would require discarding any such bean.



Blueberries – Cultivated only not wild, can be washed under a stream of water in a strainer or otherwise agitated in soap and then rinsed. If you

Brussel sprouts – whole cannot be used as they are commonly infested. If leaves are broken apart and thoroughly rinsed with soap inside their crevices and then checked, they may be used. Shredded – like cabbage salad, may be cleaned and checked if someone is keen on cleaning and checking.

Brown rice – One should look over to see that it looks healthy, which, if not, would require checking.

Cabbage – For purple and green cabbage:
 A) Remove top few leaves that are loose and look over to see if infested or not.
 B) If bugs are observed, separate the leaves, and clean and check like Category A.
 C) If clean, then slice into quarters; look at sliced sides to see that all look healthy. Break apart or shred and rinse in plain water before use.

Celery – Cut off tops and bottoms and remove leaves (if you would like to use the leaves then check like Category A. Inspect for leaf-miner trails, and remove any section if trails are found. Rinse well under running water, and rub by hand (or use a vegetable brush) to remove any dirt.

Chives – Rinse and check like Category A.

Collard Green – May be used if washed like kale, and special care needs to be taken to scrub surface (easiest with vegetable brush) as insects tend to cling to leaf on collard greens.

Edible Flowers – Must be checked individually over lightbox, if insects are found discard that flower.

Endives – Separate the leaves and wash under stream of water, checking not necessary.

Fresh Flowers – May NOT be used as decoration on any food.

Leek – to be cleaned like scallions.

Microgreens – (Dry test) Drop it with force on a white cloth or plate and then look over surface for insects. If none observed, it may be used.

Mushrooms – Button, Shimeji/ Beech, Baby Bella, Portabella mushrooms should be rinsed and ready for use. One should look them over to see that they look healthy.

Oyster, Murrell, Porcini, and exotic mushrooms are not to be used without specific growing conditions or otherwise breaking into very small pieces and checking like Category A.

Onions – Look over to see if they appear healthy. Cut first at the top and bottom of the bulb and then peel away outer layer. Onions are not to be left overnight without altering taste through using oil or salt or if in a mixture.

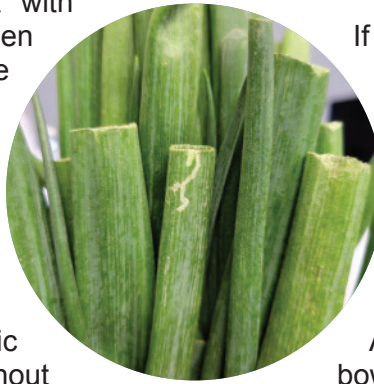
Pineapple – When slicing off the peel, cut off all rinds to expose yellow over the entirety. Crowns should not be used for decoration.

Quinoa – Ranges between seasons and brands; one can verify which brands do not require checking. Otherwise, sample check bag or batch by shaking in a sifter with 21-30 mm size mesh over a white cloth or plate, then look at white surface to see if clean of infestation. Currently quinoa from South America is commonly infested and should be checked.

Raspberries – Fresh cannot be used due to normal infestation and extreme difficulty to clean.

Riced Cauliflower – Only commercially sold frozen riced cauliflower that is raw, plain and prewashed after being riced is permitted without certification. Currently Trader Joes, Birdseye and Green Giant are approved. For the organic variety soak in soapy water and agitate it for 20 seconds rinse in a colander no checking required.

Scallions – Inspect entire leaf for leaf-miner trails and remove any pieces if found. For the **bulbs** and **leaves**, chop into pieces or slice lengthwise, rinse and wash well in soapy water and may be used.



If so desired to use the bulb whole, then slice and check midsection of every scallion (without first rinsing) using a thrip cloth to check original water. If clean, then the bulbs may be used, if insects are found, then they must be chopped, rinsed, and checked.

Strawberries –

- A) Remove the tops and place in a bowl with soapy water, agitate for like half a minute and then let soak for two minutes.
- B) Rinse each strawberry upside down under running water (with the point up, and stem part down).
- C) Place Strawberries in a new bowl with soapy water and agitate.
- D) Rinse off the soap, and it may be used immediately. It is a good practice to spot-check some of the strawberries.

If quality of strawberries is low, then more caution and checking shall be done.



Pureeing

Fruits and leafy vegetables may be used for blending if they have been thoroughly washed and blended well without checking.

Fresh strawberries can be washed and agitated with soap, no checking required and then blended.

Frozen non-organic strawberries and blueberries without additives may be used without Hashgacha for blending. Some are strict to rinse them before using. Frozen blackberries and raspberries and organic strawberries (as is commonly infested) - a) some allow to blend as is, b) some say it must be rinsed well before finely pureeing. Some allow pureeing fresh blackberries and raspberries after washing them well.

