**COLD STORAGE**

**CONNECTING THE LINKS IN THE COLD CHAIN WILL EXTEND SHELF LIFE, MAINTAIN QUALITY & LOWER YOUR FOOD SAFETY RISKS**

1ST LINK: **HARVEST**

Harvest early in the morning when produce is the coolest and fully hydrated. Maintain a high-quality product as you get it out of the field by using sharp knives, cleaned and sanitized harvest containers, and equipment in good working condition.

2ND LINK: **POST-HARVEST**

Pack in the shade, or a building with air conditioning or good ventilation. If you don’t need to rinse it, DON’T! Quickly pack it and place it in cold storage. Pro-tip: A one-hour delay in cooling can reduce your shelf life by a day or more.

3RD LINK: **STORAGE**

Quickly store produce at its ideal temperature to maintain quality. Produce like apples and tomatoes create ethylene gas as they ripen. Others, like okra and watermelon, do not but are very sensitive to it. Problems may develop if you store them together. Proper cold storage will make a big difference!

4TH LINK: **TRANSPORT**

Keep it cool from storage to delivery. Options include ice, freezer packs, coolers, or a refrigerated vehicle.

**COLD STORAGE: REDUCE FIELD HEAT & EXTEND SHELF LIFE**

It’s important to consider all your storage options. A root cellar may work in the cool North Georgia Mountains but not work along the humid Alabama and Mississippi coasts.

Keeping fruits and vegetables at their ideal temperature will improve shelf-life and could lower your food safety risks. Cooler temperatures help slow the growth of spoilage bacteria and, if they are present, could slow the growth of germs.
COLD STORAGE

USE THE ALABAMA EXTENSION BUYING, STORING & PREPARING FRESH VEGETABLES FACT SHEET ALONG WITH THESE QUESTIONS TO HELP CONSIDER YOUR STORAGE OPTIONS:

- **What temperature will improve shelf life and quality?**
- **Can my crops benefit from curing (garlic, sweet potatoes, etc.) before storage?**
- **What options do I have to increase airflow and ventilation?**
- **What steps will decrease potential pest and rodent activity?**

- **Do different crops need different storage conditions?**
- **How can I insulate my long-term storage?**
- **Is a humidifier or dehumidifier needed to add or remove moisture?**
- **Can I ensure that condensation (water) doesn’t drip on produce?**
  Drops of water can increase spoilage and spread germs.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Postharvest Storage, Packaging and Handling of Specialty Crops: A Guide for Florida Small Farm Producers - [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs1270](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs1270)
- Forced Air Cooling on the Farm - [https://blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/2018/10/09/forced-air-cooling-on-the-farm/](https://blog.uvm.edu/cwcallah/2018/10/09/forced-air-cooling-on-the-farm/)
- Keeping Produce Fresh: Best Practices for Producers - [https://extension.psu.edu/keeping-produce-fresh-best-practices-for-producers](https://extension.psu.edu/keeping-produce-fresh-best-practices-for-producers)
- Buying, Storing & Preparing Fresh Vegetables - [https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/home-food-preservation/buying-storing-preparing-fresh-vegetables/](https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/home-food-preservation/buying-storing-preparing-fresh-vegetables/)