



Lettuce Information Sheet

Purchasing Specifications

Specification should state grade, type, size, and quantity. Lettuce should have a light to dark green color and be bright and crisp. Depending on variety and type, lettuce also may have a reddish to dark burgundy appearance on the outer leaves. Any variety or type of lettuce should have not more than 12% defects that make lettuce unusable, and no more than 3% should be affected by decay. Romaine-type lettuce shall have not more than 10% and 2%, respectively. If lettuce is purchased in sealed bags, it should be unwashed and display the same characteristics as loose product.

Lettuce Varieties with U.S. Grades

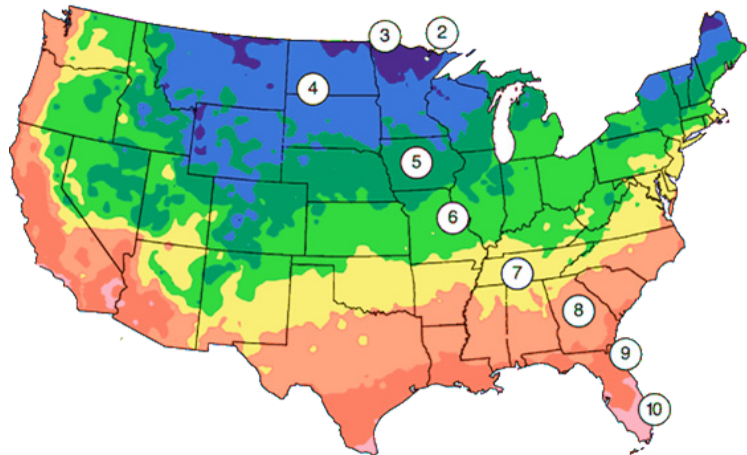
- Lettuce - Includes Iceberg (very compact head), Boston, and Bibb types (loosely compacted heads).
- Field Grown Leaf Lettuce - Most common are red leaf and green leaf with loosely compacted heads.
- Romaine - Generally the longer and broad green leaf type with a whitish sweet core.
- Greenhouse Leaf Lettuce - Includes the varieties of field lettuce grown in a controlled atmosphere.

Most Common U.S. Grades

U.S. No. 1 is common to all the lettuce varieties and types, and is considered the standard for commercial use. U.S. No. 1 consists of lettuce of similar varietal characteristics that are well developed, fairly well trimmed, free from decay, doubles, and freezing. U.S. No. 1 lettuce should be free from damage by broken midribs, bruising, dirt or foreign material, discoloration, downy mildew, seedstems, tipburn, watersoaked, yellowing, insects, worms, or mechanical or other means.

Domestic Harvest

- 2, 3: July - September
- 4, 5: August - October
- 6: September - November
- 7: October - November
- 8, 9, 10: June - September



Many lettuce varieties are grown throughout the United States and are harvested at varying times throughout the year, making year-round locally available lettuce possible. Check with your county or state Cooperative Extension Office for specific information regarding lettuce production in your area.



Lettuce Information Sheet, continued

Receiving Guidelines

Desirable Characteristics



Iceberg



Red Leaf



Butter (Bibb)



Romaine



Romaine Hearts

- Color should be bright and product crisp.

Product Defects



Russet Spots



Discoloration



Peeling/Feathering



Downey Mildew



Decay

- Lettuce should not be flabby or wilted.

Storing and Handling Guidelines

- Store lettuce ideally as close to 32 °F as possible with a relative humidity of 98 to 100% and some air circulation. Lettuce stored at refrigeration temperatures closer to 41 °F and below has an approximate shelf life of 5 days. Do not freeze lettuce. Do not store lettuce in dry storage areas.
- Store lettuce in air tight containers for maximum shelf life.
- Store lettuce away from ethylene gas producing items such as apples, grapes and berries because lettuce is extremely sensitive to ethylene and will develop russet spotting and soft rot within 24 hours.
- Store, hold, and serve lettuce at 41 °F degrees or below at all times. Do not allow direct contact with ice at any time during storing, handling, or serving.
- Use lettuce as soon as possible because it is a very perishable product. Avoid using leafy greens with visible signs of decay or damage. Remove unusable portions or discard entire head.
- Wash lettuce just prior to serving under cold, running water. Strip outer coarse leaves from heads prior to washing. Do not immerse or allow to soak in water. Separate the leaves of Romaine during washing to remove sand and debris.
- Do not wash lettuce that has been labeled pre-washed.
- Add lettuce to soups or stews during the last 3 to 5 minutes of cooking if it has passed its peak quality.