Fruit, nut gifts should be refrigerated to maintain quality

K-State’s Upham shares tips for preserving popular holiday food gifts

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — If you’ve received a beautiful basket filled with fruit and other goodies for Christmas, enjoy it.

But, maybe not for too long.

If you want the fruit to maintain its freshness, Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham suggests you disassemble the basket and place the fruit in refrigerated storage.

“If all of the products in the basket are tree fruits – apples, pears, oranges, grapefruit, for example – you can place the entire basket in a cool place,” or about 40 degrees Fahrenheit, according to Upham.

If the basket contains bananas or other tropical fruits (with the exception of citrus), remove those fruits and store separately. “About 3-4 weeks is about as long as you can expect to store these fruits without some shriveling and loss of crispness,” Upham said.

Nuts for the holidays

Pecans and other nuts are another popular gift during the holiday season. Like fruit, Upham said nuts can quickly lose quality if not stored properly.

“Excessive water loss can lead to shriveled nutmeats, and the fats and oils in nuts can quickly spoil, developing an off-flavor or rancid taste,” he said.

Store shelled or unshelled nuts in the refrigerator or freezer. Upham said nuts quickly absorb flavors from other stored products so he recommends storing them in a tightly sealed container.

“A solid plastic container with a tightly fitting lid is preferred,” he said. “You can use a heavy grade resealable plastic bag, as well. If nutmeats are tightly sealed, they can be stored in a freezer for up to one year, but using them within six months is preferred.”
Upham and his colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden- and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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