

Did You Know?

Controlled Atmosphere

Often you will see reference on our pricing or commentaries showing produce as being "CA" or "MA".

A Bit about Plants and Oxygen

Every piece of fruit or vegetable you eat came from a plant that wants to produce seeds.

But we harvest apples before they have fallen to the ground, rotted, and their seeds have rooted. We take all the potatoes, onions, leeks, cabbage, broccoli, mangoes, bananas - every fruit and vegetable into the marketplace before it's done with its 'procreation' cycle. So when we cut lettuce, or pull leeks, or pack away pears, the plants try to stay alive, thinking at some point that they will produce seeds, and have done their duty, created their children and perpetuated their species. We all understand that - we do it ourselves, and thinking back to when we were 17, that's probably all we thought about!



From cut lettuce to papaya - everything you buy is alive and wants to continue growing - and they continue to breathe in carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. The oxygen is the gas that turns kale and collards yellow, ripens tomatoes from green to red, bananas from green to yellow, and mangoes from hard to soft.

And now the CA story...

"CA" storage has been around for decades - otherwise we wouldn't have B.C. apples harvested in September still crisp and juicy in May. Special storage simply filters out the excess oxygen, replaces it with carbon dioxide and nitrogen, and 'scrubs' out the excess ethylene gas. This technology allows us to not only store apples and pears, but also ship very perishable commodities like asparagus and cherries from Chile in sea containers equipped with Controlled Atmosphere capability. Over the past few years, this same concept has been used for plastic bags lining boxes of cherries and other fruits and vegetables. These bags have pores that allow an exchange of gas and also have natural minerals (zeolite) embedded in the plastic that absorb ethylene.

All these technologies are certified organic. They don't use chemicals, only the natural gas exchanges, to maintain freshness in produce.

Of course, because of the operating cost of Controlled Atmosphere is more than regular cooler storage, CA crops will have a cost premium. That's the trade off for having snappy apples and firm cherries for an extended window of availability.