

The Augusta Chronicle

COLUMNS

Campbell Vaughn: How can you tell if a melon is ripe? Find out here.

Campbell Vaughn Augusta Chronicle

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Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

Ripe watermelons have a cream or yellow belly, prominent stripes, and a hollow sound when thumped.

Ripe cantaloupes easily slip from the vine, leaving a small cavity, and have abundant netting with a cream or tan color.

Ripe honeydews have a creamy color, slightly soft blossom end, a sweet smell, and sometimes loose, rattling seeds.

We are in full swing of melon season and folks want to know how to pick a nice ripe one. Interestingly enough, there are some good methods to know when to pick one off the vine as well as at the marketplace.

Watermelons are designed to tell us when they are ready to pick.

As watermelons ripen, the vine and plant undergo some changes. There are some small curly growths along the watermelon vines called tendrils. One of the first indicators of ripeness is that the tendril nearest to the fruit will brown and die. Once you see this, you know that the fruit is approaching its maturity.

Campbell Vaughn: [If you want healthy plants at the end of summer, make them work for water](#)

Probably the surest indicator of ripeness is that the belly of the melon (the part touching the ground) will turn cream or yellow in color. The darkness of the yellow color on the belly will depend on the variety of the watermelon.

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Other indications of ripeness in watermelons have to do with the surface of the watermelon. As the fruit ripens, the stripes on the watermelon become more prominent. This is because the underlying color lightens, and the stripes then appear darker.

Some may remember the old-fashioned method of selecting a melon by thumping it with a finger. Riper melons sound more hollow. When I try this method, I keep thinking of the grocery store manager who scolds the lady for squeezing the Charmin. This method is difficult to perfect but sometimes helps eliminate the last two or three choices. So maybe a combination of these methods is best.

As for cantaloupes, these vine dwellers send a clear message when they are ready to leave the garden for the table. Ripe cantaloupes will slip loose from the vine when gently pulled. The stem will remain on the vine and leave a shallow cavity on the fruit. This characteristic is aptly called “slip”.

In the market, look for cantaloupes that have a small cavity on the stem end. Also look at the color under the trademark armored “netting” covering the rind that gives cantaloupe its unique appearance. Abundant netting with a tan or cream color is very important to look for when selecting ripe cantaloupes.

Although honeydew doesn’t grow that well in Georgia, we still need to know how to pick a good one. Does it smell sweet? That is probably the best method for honeydew lovers picking their breakfast fruit.

When honeydews ripen, the green skin color turns creamy, and the blossom end will give slightly under pressure. Also, as the fruit ripens, the seeds may get loose in the fruit and rattle.

Unlike bananas, melons do not ripen after they are picked. Picking stops the transport of sugar into the fruits. Let the melons ripen on the vine for the best flavor. The flesh of the melon will soften after the fruit is picked, but you will get the best quality when the fruits ripen on the vine.

Whether you pick your melons in the patch, at a stand, or at the grocery store, you need to ask some questions if you want to pick the right one. Go ahead and get well acquainted with the melon before you buy it. You will be glad that you know the secrets to picking a good melon.