

# Guide to Wisconsin Fresh Vegetables

## Enjoying the Season's Bounty

Use this guide when using your farmers' market vouchers to select and care for the vegetables you purchase this season. Each vegetable fact sheet contains tips for buying, storing and eating Wisconsin's locally grown, fresh vegetables. Source: *PA Nutrition Education Network* [panen.org/snac](http://panen.org/snac)

### For more information:

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[eauclaireuwex.edu](http://eauclaireuwex.edu)



## Did You Know?

### Eau Claire Farmers' Markets

#### Downtown: Riverfront Terrace

Token Program: QUEST, Debit & Credit Cards Accepted. Swipe your card to buy tokens to spend at any vendor on any market day!

Token Program Hours:  
Sat 8:30AM - 12:30PM (June - Sept)

[ecdowntownfarmersmarket.com/events](http://ecdowntownfarmersmarket.com/events)

#### Festival Foods Farmers Market

Sun 7:00AM - 2:00PM

Gordy's (Hamilton Avenue) Farmer's Market

Tues & Sat 8:00AM - 2:00PM

Gordy's (Birch Street) Farmers Market

Wed 8:00AM - 2:00PM



## Selecting Tomatoes

*Lycopene is a natural substance in tomatoes, tomato products, and other fruits; it's what gives tomatoes their rich red color. Many studies have shown a reduced risk of prostate cancer from frequent intake of tomato products. Cooked tomato products such as spaghetti sauce, tomato juice and ketchup seem to be the best source of lycopene.*

### Look for

Smooth, well-ripened, and free from blemishes or bruises. Look for unpackaged tomatoes or those packaged in perforated wraps. This allows for good air circulation, which is needed to ripen tomatoes.

**For fully ripe fruit:** look for an overall rich, red color and a slight softness. Softness is easily detected by gentle handling.

**For tomatoes slightly less than fully ripe:** look for firm texture and colors from pink to light red.



### Avoid

- Soft, overripe, or bruised tomatoes.
- Growth cracks (deep brown cracks around the stem).
- Decayed tomatoes which will have soft, water-soaked spots, depressed areas, or surface mold.



### Nutrient-Rich

Tomatoes are high in Vitamin C and are a source of beta carotene, potassium, folic acid, iron, and fiber. Tomatoes are also high in antioxidants, especially lycopene, which has recently been found to prevent some cancers.

### Storage Tips

If a tomato is not yet ripe, keep it in a warm place. To speed the ripening process, you can put tomatoes in a paper bag with an apple or banana. Do not ripen tomatoes in direct sunlight, because even though the skin is red, the tomatoes will not be ripe and flavorful inside.

## Varieties

**Cherry:** Round and bite-sized; with red or yellow skin. Goes well with any salad



**Plum:** Also known as Italian or Roma tomatoes, these are small and egg-shaped. Less juicy than slicing tomatoes, plum tomatoes are nice for making sauces and adding to other cooked foods.



**Slicing:** Also called beefsteaks, slicing are the biggest tomatoes. Beefsteak tomatoes have less juice so they hold together well when sliced. Large slices make them great for adding flavor to your favorite sandwich. Slicing tomatoes also cook down well for sauces.

[www.panen.org](http://www.panen.org)





## Selecting Carrots

Carrots are available year round. Most are sold when young, tender, and mild-flavored. Larger carrots are packed separately and are used for cooking or shredding.

### Look for

Crisp, firm, small to medium carrots. Dark orange carrots have more vitamin A. If tops are attached, they should be fresh and green.

### Always Available

Carrots are always available fresh.  
Carrots are healthy fresh, frozen or canned.



### Avoid

Carrots with large green areas at the top. Avoid carrots that are flabby from wilting or show spots of soft rot. Avoid carrots that are wilted.

### Nutrient-Rich

Carrots are an excellent source of beta-carotene, vitamin A and vitamin K. Carrots are high in fiber. Carrots are also a good source of potassium.

### Many Uses

Carrots can be boiled, baked, or microwaved. Carrots can be put into soups, stews, casseroles, cakes and quick breads. Remove any greens attached to the carrots before storing. Refrigerate in produce drawer for up to 2 weeks. Don't store carrots together with apples or pears. It will make the carrots have a bitter flavor.

## Did You Know?

<http://www.panen.org>

- Except for beets, carrots contain more sugar than any other vegetable. This makes carrots a satisfying snack eaten raw and tasty in cooked dishes.
- The carrot is a member of the parsley family. This family includes celery, parsnip, fennel, dill, and coriander.
- Carrots are more nutritious cooked than raw. Cooking softens the cells and makes more nutrients available. Be careful not to overcook!
- Eating carrots with fats such as olive oil increases the body's absorption of beta-carotene.



## Selecting Cauliflower

The white edible portion is called "the curd" and the heavy outer leaf covering is called "the jacket leaves." Cauliflower is sold with most of the jacket leaves removed, and may be wrapped in plastic film.

### Look for

White to creamy-white, compact, solid, and clean curds.

### Always Available

Cauliflower is inexpensive and can be found year round fresh or frozen.



### Avoid

Wilted or discolored spots. Speckles on the curd are a sign of insect injury, mold growth, or decay, and should be avoided.

### Nutrient-Rich

Cauliflower is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of fiber. Cauliflower is also a source of vitamin K, folate, and potassium. Like most vegetables, cauliflower is low in calories, fat, and cholesterol.

### Cancer-Preventing

A cruciferous vegetable, cauliflower contains natural chemicals that may be helpful in the prevention of some cancers.

### Many Uses

Cauliflower can be eaten raw or cooked as a side dish or mixed with other foods as part of a main course. Store unwashed cauliflower in a plastic bag in the refrigerator's vegetable crisper. Cauliflower will keep in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.

## Why is Vitamin K Important?

<http://www.panen.org>

- Vitamin K is a fat-soluble vitamin, which means it is absorbed best with dietary fat. Vitamin K is best known for its role in helping blood clot properly after an injury. Vitamin K is helpful in this situation because it is responsible for making clotting factors in the liver. Vitamin K also plays an important role in bone health.
- Vitamin K is found in cauliflower, spinach, cabbage, and other green leafy vegetables, cereals, soybeans, and other vegetables. Vitamin K is also made by the bacteria that line the gastrointestinal tract.



## Selecting Corn

*Sweet corn is available all year. From early May until mid-September, corn is the least expensive with the best flavor.*

### Look for

Sweet corn with fresh green husks and soft, golden silk. Silk ends should be free from decay, and stem ends (opposite from the silk) should not be discolored or dried. When at the market, pull back the green husks to see if each ear is filled with kernels. The kernels should look moist, plump and bright in color (yellow or white).



### Avoid

Ears with under-developed kernels; corn with very large kernels; dark yellow or dried kernels; ears of corn with yellowed, wilted, dried husks, or dried-out stem ends.

### Nutrient-Rich

Sweet corn is high in fiber, niacin, and folate. Sweet corn with yellow kernels has small amounts of vitamin A. Frozen and canned corn have about the same nutrient value as fresh corn.

### Storing and Serving

For best quality, refrigerate corn as soon as possible. Corn stays fresh for almost a week, if it has been kept cold and moist. To "shuck" corn, pull the husks down the ear and snap off the stem at the base. Under cold running water, use a stiff vegetable brush and rub the ear in a circular motion to remove the silk.

## Did You Know?

<http://www.panen.org>

- As soon as corn is picked, the sugar in the kernels begins to turn into starch. Starch hardens the kernels of the corn. To slow down this process, fresh corn should be kept cool. Fresh corn is often found on top of ice in the store or at the farmer's market.
- Popcorn does not come from sweet corn. Popcorn is a field-type corn with thick-walled kernels. When heated, steam is trapped inside the dried kernels, causing them to "explode."
- Popcorn can be a great snack. It is low in calories and is a good source of fiber. For a low-fat snack, try sprinkling cinnamon or Cajun spices on popcorn.

## Selecting Spinach

*Spinach is available year round. At the market, spinach can be found in the fresh produce section of the market in bunches or bags. Spinach can be found frozen and canned.*



### Look for

Leaves that are fresh, young, tender, and mostly whole (not torn). Look for dark green leaves and lighter green stems.



### Avoid

Leaves with thick, tough stems, yellowish-green color, softness or a wilted condition. These are all signs of decay.

### Nutrient-Rich

Spinach is an excellent source of vitamin K. Vitamin K is needed for blood clotting. Spinach is a good source of folate and an excellent source of vitamin A in the form of beta-carotene.

### Storage

Keep bunched spinach in plastic bags. Keep prepackaged spinach in the bag it came in. Place in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator. Spinach will keep in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days.

### Many Uses

Spinach can be eaten raw in a salad or sandwich in place of lettuce. It can be eaten cooked as a side dish, or mixed with other foods as part of a main course.

## What is Beta-Carotene?

<http://www.panen.org>

- Beta-carotene is an antioxidant and a part of the carotenoid vitamin family. Carotenoids are found in brightly colored green, red, and orange vegetables, and red or orange fruits. The brighter the color of a fruit or vegetable, the more beta-carotene it has. Our bodies use beta-carotene to make vitamin A.
- Vitamin A is important for vision, immune function, and skin and bone health. Some studies show beta-carotene may reduce the risk of heart disease. Spinach is an excellent source of beta-carotene.



## Selecting Broccoli

Broccoli is available all year. In some markets, the florets (tops) of the broccoli are sold without the stalk. Broccoli can be mixed with a variety of foods. It can be used as a soup, salad, flavoring for grains, or even as a main dish. *Cooking Tip:* For boiling or steaming, use a non-aluminum pot or pan. Aluminum enhances broccoli's cooking odors.

### Look for

Firm, tightly bunched florets; florets should be dark green, sage green, or even greenish purple; stems should not be too thick or too tough.

### Storage

Place unwashed broccoli in a plastic bag. Keep broccoli in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Cooked leftovers may be refrigerated for 2 to 3 days in a tightly covered container.



### Avoid

Open buds or yellow flowers; yellowish-green color; wilted or limp broccoli; soft, slippery, water-soaked spots on buds.

### Nutrient-Rich

Broccoli is an excellent source of vitamin C and of dietary fiber. Broccoli is a good source of potassium and vitamin A. Broccoli contains sulforaphane, a phytonutrient that has been shown in some studies to reduce the risk of cancer.

### Cooking Tips

Broccoli florets cook much faster than the stalks. Cut the stalks lengthwise. This causes the stalk to cook faster. Another option is to cut off the florets and add them to the pot after the stalks have cooked for 2 to 3 minutes.

## Other Varieties of Broccoli

### Broccolini



### Broccoflower



### Broccoli sprouts



## Selecting Beets

Beets are available all year long. Many beets are sold in bunches with the greens (leaves) still attached. Others are sold loose, with the greens removed. Beets are most often sold in jars or cans. Beets in jars can be plain or pickled.



### Look for

Firm, round beets with a slender tap root (the root at the bottom); rich, deep red color (if red); smooth surface.

### Nutrient-Rich

Beets are an excellent source of folate. Beets are good sources of potassium, vitamin C, and fiber.

### Serving Suggestions

Beets have a sweet flavor. They are great cold or hot. Beets go well with meats, in soups, and with other vegetables.

### Sizing up beets

The size of beet determines if and how it should be cooked. Small beets that are less than 1 ½ inches round are excellent raw in salads. Medium and large size beets are good for cooking. Very large roots are too tough and woody for eating.



### Avoid

Long beets with round, scaly areas around the top surface (these beets will be tough, fibrous, and strong flavored); wilted, flabby beets (these have been exposed to the air.)

### Storage

Cut off the greens (leave an inch on the beet) and place the unwashed beets in a plastic bag. The roots will keep in the refrigerator crisper for up to 3 weeks. The beet greens should be used as soon as possible, as they will keep for only a few days. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper.

## Did You Know?

<http://www.panen.org>  
Chard is a member of the beet family, which includes Swiss chard, leaf beet, spinach beet, silver beet, seakale beet, or white beet.

Chard produces broad leaves rather than a large round root. The leaves are eaten for their tender texture and mild flavor. The leaf and stalk can be eaten raw or cooked. Different varieties of Swiss chard are pictured below.





## Selecting Peppers

Bell peppers are in stores all year, but are less expensive during the summer. Fresh peppers come in many colors (even purple), shapes, and sizes. Green bell peppers are usually the least expensive. When buying other colors of peppers, try to buy them on sale at your local market. When selecting peppers, follow the same guidelines.

### Look for

Peppers with deep color, glossy skin, and firmness.

### Storage

Store unwashed peppers in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Peppers will stay fresh for about a week. Green bell peppers will stay fresh a little longer than the yellow and red ones.

### Avoid

Peppers with thin walls (flimsy sides); peppers that are wilted or with cuts or tears through the walls; and peppers with soft watery spots on the sides.



### Nutrient-Rich

Peppers are high in vitamin C and are a source of beta-carotene, potassium, folic acid, and fiber.

### Many Uses

Peppers mix well with almost any type of food, such as poultry, fish, rice, pasta, as well as other vegetables. Frozen peppers are pre-cut and available all year. Peppers are great to eat raw, stuffed, roasted, stewed, or pickled. Peppers can be a healthy side dish or snack.

## How Hot is Hot?

Scoville heat units measure the spiciness in peppers. The table below shows the range of heat found in different types of peppers. Bell peppers have no heat while Red Savina Habanero is the spiciest pepper.

Scoville Units	
Pepper	Heat Range
Sweet Bell	0
Pepperoncini	100 ~ 500
Pasilla	1,000 ~ 2,000
Rocofillo	1,500 ~ 2,500
Jalapeno	2,500 ~ 8,000
Chipolte	5,000 ~ 8,000
Serrano	8,000 ~ 22,000
Tabasco	30,000 ~ 50,000
Thai	50,000 ~ 100,000
Habanero	100,000 ~ 325,000
Red Savina Habanero	350,000 ~ 577,000
<b>Pure Capsaicin</b>	<b>15-16,000,000</b>

Adapted from <http://ushotstuff.com/HeatScale.htm>



## Selecting Cabbage

Cabbage can be eaten raw in a salad or sandwich in place of lettuce. Cabbage can be eaten cooked as a side dish, or mixed with other foods as part of a main course.

### Look for

Firm or compact heads. Outer leaves should be a good green or red color (depending on type), and free from large blemishes.

### Always Available

Cabbage is inexpensive. Cabbage can be found year-round fresh or canned.

### Avoid

Cabbage with wilted, discolored, decayed dried outer leaves or with yellow leaves. Avoid worm-eaten outer leaves. Separation of the leaves from the core indicates over-age.



### Nutrient-Rich

Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of fiber. Cabbage is also a source of vitamin K, folate, and potassium.

Like most vegetables, cabbage is low in calories, fat, and cholesterol.

### Cancer-Preventing

A cruciferous vegetable, cabbage contains natural chemical compounds that may be helpful in the prevention of certain types of cancer.

### Storage

Cabbage keeps well. The vitamin C lasts longer if cabbage is kept cold. Refrigerate in a loosely sealed plastic bag. Cabbage heads stay fresh 1 to 2 weeks. Sliced cabbage keeps 5 to 6 days. Rubbing cut surfaces with lemon juice will help prevent discoloration.

## Cabbage Varieties

Green cabbage



Savoy cabbage



Red cabbage



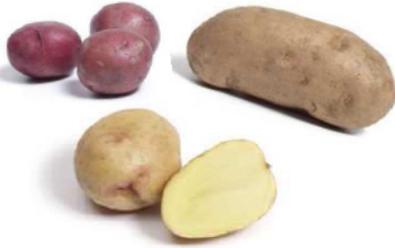
Bok Choy cabbage



Napa cabbage



# Selecting Potatoes



The potato is the most popular vegetable in the world. There are lots of great ways to eat potatoes. Most of a potato's nutrients lie just below the skin. When peeling, be sure to peel as close to the surface as possible. Potatoes can be baked, boiled, steamed, roasted, mashed, or fried. They are often used as an ingredient in soups, stews, casseroles, and other mixed dishes.

## Available

Potatoes are inexpensive and available year round.

## Look For

With new potatoes, look for firm potatoes that are free from spots and have smooth skins. For all-purpose and baking potatoes, look for reasonably smooth, firm potatoes free from spots and decay.

## Avoid

Potatoes with large cuts, bruises, or decay. Sprouted, soft, or shriveled potatoes have lost nutritional value. Also, avoid green potatoes, as the green parts may cause bitter flavor.

## Nutrient-Rich

Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C, potassium, and vitamin B6. They are a good source of niacin and thiamin (other B vitamins), too.

## Storage

Store potatoes in a cool, dark, dry place, away from apples or onions. Don't put them in an airtight plastic container or bag – they need some air. Also, don't store them in the refrigerator; this will make them taste sweet instead of starchy.

# Potato Varieties

Russet Potato



Red Potato



Yukon Gold Potato



New Potato



# Selecting Winter Squash



Winter squash can be prepared with sweet or savory flavors. Winter squash goes well with meats, fruits, and other vegetables. Each type varies in texture, aroma and flavor.

## Look for

A hard, tough rind with the stem attached; squash that is heavy for its size (meaning a thick wall and plenty of edible flesh).

## In Season

Harvested in September and late October, winter squash is widely available until late winter.

## Avoid

Squash with cuts, punctures, sunken spots, or moldy spots on the rind. These are signs of decay. A tender rind means that the squash is not ripe. Unripe squash lacks flavor.

## Nutrient-Rich

Winter squash are good to excellent sources of vitamin A, beta-carotene, potassium, vitamin C and fiber. Winter squash also contains niacin, folate, and iron.

## Healthy Snack

Pumpkin seeds are a source of protein, fiber and iron. Try roasting pumpkin seeds at 350°F on a cookie sheet for 5 to 10 minutes (until golden brown) for a healthy snack.

## Storage

Winter squash can keep for up to three months if stored in a cool, dry place. Squash stores best with part of the stem still attached to help retain its moisture. Once cut open, store squash wrapped in plastic in the refrigerator for 4 to 5 days.

# Squash Varieties





# Selecting Lettuce

*Lettuce varieties can be put into four groups: romaine, butterhead, crisphead and looseleaf. Each group has its own growth and taste characteristics. Of the lettuce varieties, Romaine lettuce is the best source of lutein. Lutein is also found in the retina of the eye. Some studies have shown that eating foods with lutein may protect against some age-related eye disorders.*

## Availability

Lettuce is inexpensive and available year-round.

## Storage

Iceberg and Romaine lettuce leaves should be crisp. Other lettuce types will have a softer texture, but the leaves should not be wilted. Look for a good, bright color (light to medium green). Some varieties of lettuce, like Red Leaf, have red leaves.

## Avoid

Heads of Iceberg that are very hard and lack a bright green color or that have bumps; lettuce with a tan or brown area around the edges of the leaves; any decay-like wilting or sliminess.

## Nutrient-Rich

Most greens are good sources of vitamin C, beta-carotene, iron, calcium, folate, and fiber. Generally, the darker the green, the more nutritious the leaf.

## Storage

Keep lettuce in plastic bags in the refrigerator's crisper section. Iceberg lettuce stores the best, lasting about two weeks in the refrigerator. Romaine lettuce lasts ten days. Butterhead types and endives last about four days.

# Lettuce Varieties

<b>Romaine</b> 	Also known as Cos, this lettuce has a long shape with darker outer leaves. The tight, inner leaves are good in salad because of the light, mild taste.
<b>Butterhead</b> 	Varieties of Butterhead include Boston lettuce (which looks like a blooming rose) and Bib (which has a small cup-shaped appearance). This variety of lettuce has loose heads, grassy green-colored leaves, buttery texture, and a mild flavor.
<b>Crisphead</b> 	The most popular type of Crisphead is Iceberg lettuce, which is known for its crispy leaves and mild flavor. The pale green lettuce looks like cabbage with its leaves packed together. Crisphead Lettuce has less Vitamin A than other types of lettuce, which is why it may be a good idea to mix Crisphead lettuce with other salad greens.
<b>Looseleaf</b> 	Looseleaf variety does not grow to form lettuce heads. Instead, it has loose leaves with curly edges joined at the stem. The flavor of Looseleaf is light and mild. Common types are Oak Leaf, Red Leaf, and Green Leaf.



# Selecting Summer Squash

*Summer squashes are gourds that belong to the same family as melons and cucumbers. Most varieties have a creamy white flesh on the inside protected by an outside rind or soft shell.*

## Look for

Squash that are tender and firm. Tender squash has glossy skin instead of dull. It is neither hard nor tough. Select squash that have no bruises.

## Always Available

Available all year. Best from May to August.

## Nutrient-Rich

When eaten with the skin, summer squash is a good source of vitamin C. To get the most nutrients, eat the entire vegetable, including the flesh, seeds, and skins.



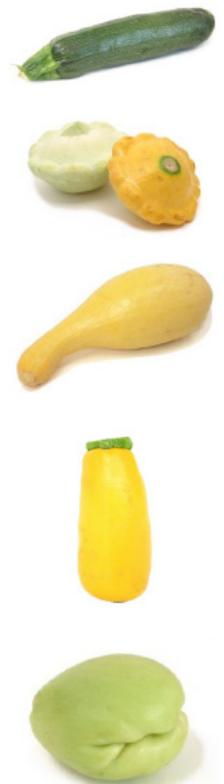
## Types of Squash

The most popular summer squash is zucchini. All types of summer squash are alike enough to be mixed in recipes.

## Storage

Place in a plastic bag and store in the crisper of the refrigerator. Summer squash will keep for a week in the refrigerator. Wash squash well and trim the ends. Summer squash does not need to be peeled or seeded.

# Varieties



## Avoid

Stale or over-mature squash. This squash will have a dull skin and a hard, tough surface. Squash with these qualities will also have a dry, stringy texture inside. Avoid squash with discolored or pitted areas.



# Rutabagas

Rutabagas are available all year. But these root vegetables are best in the fall. Rutabagas are often trimmed of taproots and tops. When found in the grocery store, they are coated with clear wax to prevent moisture loss.

## Look for

Firm, smooth vegetables with a round, oval shape. Rutabagas should feel heavy for their size.

## Avoid

Avoid rutabagas with punctures, deep cuts, cracks, or decay.



## Storage

Rutabagas keep well. Refrigerate in a plastic bag for two weeks or more. If stored at room temperature, rutabagas will last a week.

## Nutrient-Rich

Rutabagas are an excellent source of vitamin C, and a good source of potassium, fiber and vitamin A.

## Serving Ideas

The wax and skin of rutabagas must be peeled before cooking. A sharp paring knife is better than a vegetable peeler. Quarter rutabagas for easier peeling. Place rutabagas in boiling water for about five minutes before baking, braising, or stir-frying. Rutabagas mix well with other root vegetables.



## Did You Know?

<http://www.panen.org>

- Rutabagas are relatives of turnips. Rutabagas are larger, denser and sweeter than turnips. Smaller rutabagas tend to be sweeter than larger rutabagas. Rutabagas have a lumpy, irregular shape with tan skin, and a dark purple band at the crown.
- Rutabaga's name comes from the Swedish word rotabagge, meaning "round root." Rutabagas are thought to be a mix of turnips and wild cabbage.
- "Cruciferous vegetables". (like rutabaga, broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts) have nutrients that may be cancer-fighting and good for your health.



# Snap Beans

Snap beans can be green, yellow (wax), round, or flat. There are two basic types of snap beans: green-podded and yellow-podded (wax beans). Snap beans come in different shapes: long, short, flat, round, broad.

## Nutrient-Rich

Green beans and yellow beans are a moderate source of fiber, folate and beta-carotene. Snap beans also contain small amounts of calcium and vitamin C.

## Look for

Bright colors. Green and yellow beans should be crisp, firm, and snap when broken.

## Always Available

Green and wax beans are available in stores all year.



## Storage

Place beans in a plastic bag and place in the crisper of the refrigerator. Beans will stay fresh in the refrigerator for 5 days.

## Avoid

Beans that are wilted, flabby or that have brownish scars. Beans that have thick, tough pods are over-ripe.

## Many Uses

Green and yellow beans are similar in taste, texture and nutrition. Mix them together for more color and crunch!

## Did You Know?

<http://www.panen.org>

Beans are often called "string" beans. Years ago a string ran along the seam of the bean. These strings were tough. And it was necessary to remove the string prior to cooking. Now, this is no longer needed. New varieties of beans do not have tough seams. The "snapping" noise when breaking off the ends of the bean is the reason for its other nickname, snap bean.

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