

Keep / Harvest-to-cooler reference / 1 of 2

Harvest by maturity, not size.

Look for a species-specific change of shape, not simply the largest mushroom on the block.

Shiitake

Most of the cap is open, with the edge still rounded or curled and the gills visible.

A flat, pancake-like cap is late in Cornell's guide. Maturity affects keeping quality, so extra size can come at the expense of a useful harvest window.

Oyster

The cap retains a slight curl and the flesh remains flexible.

Cornell describes flatter clusters as more fragile. Read the cap edge and handling texture together rather than waiting for the widest possible spread.

Lion's mane

Teeth point downward and are about 1 cm long.

This is Cornell's approximate harvest cue, not a universal threshold. It is a different kind of signal from an opening cap: here you watch the teeth.

Use the cue, keep the context

These are guide cues for the named cultivated mushrooms, not a species-identification or crop-safety test. Note which cue you used and when you harvested; it gives the next batch a more useful comparison than size alone.

Harvest maturity / Cornell: Post-Harvest Handling

<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/harvest-to-market-guide/post-harvesting-handling/>

Next: ready the vessel, detach gently, remove debris, then cool and protect the harvest. No archive plate is being presented as a calibrated example of these maturity cues.

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The cut is not the finish.

Plan the receiving vessel and the cold destination before the first mushroom leaves the block.

01 / Ready the receiving vessel

Use a food-safe harvest vessel that has been washed and thoroughly dried. Have the receiving space ready so the harvest has a prepared destination.

03 / Remove debris before storage

Brush off debris rather than washing the harvest. Use a damp cloth to dab remaining dirt if needed. These are handling steps for sound mushrooms, not a way to rescue spoiled product.

05 / Protect with air exchange

Choose food-safe protective packaging that allows air exchange. Paper bags suit small quantities. Breathable or unsealed packaging matters more than a blanket rule against one material.

02 / Detach gently

Cut or snip near the stem base, or use pulling and twisting where appropriate. Choose the method for the mushroom and situation; avoid treating one movement as a rule for every crop.

04 / Refrigerate after cleaning

Cornell recommends 36–38°F (approximately 2–3°C). Arrange that cold space as part of the harvest, not as a problem to solve when the receiving vessel is full.

06 / Check the handoff

Confirm that the buyer has cold storage. Your cooler is one part of the route; the receiving end needs to be ready too. These steps do not promise a fixed storage life.

The sequence to remember

Prepared vessel → gentle harvest → debris removal → refrigeration → protected, breathable handoff.
Maturity and handling belong to the same quality decision.

Handling and refrigeration / Cornell: Post-Harvest Handling

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