

PLU Product Codes and Their Meanings

Produce Code: Numeric codes used on produce stickers identify how food products were grown.

Those stickers on fruits and veggies tell you quite a bit! 4 numbers mean they were conventionally grown. 5 numbers starting with number 8 means they are genetically modified (GMO). And 5 numbers starting with 9 means they were organically grown.

In general, this bit of information about the codes used on stickers to label produce in grocery stores is correct in a strictly literal sense. The International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) has defined a list of PLU (Price Look-Up) numbering codes for loose produce. These five-digit codes (which are sometimes four digits, because leading zeroes are typically not displayed) identify qualities associated with an item of produce, such as its type, its size, where it was grown, and how it was grown:

PLU codes have been used by supermarkets since 1990 to make check-out and inventory control easier, faster, and more accurate. Fresh fruit and vegetable PLU codes are used to identify bulk produce (and related items such as nuts and herbs). For example, they tell the supermarket cashier whether an apple is a conventionally grown Fuji apple which may sell for \$1.29 per pound/kg versus an organically grown Fuji apple which may sell for \$2.29 per pound/kg. In some instances they also differentiate by size (e.g., small, medium, large) The last four digits of all the PLU codes issued so far fall into the 3000-4000 range, with the first digit of each code currently assigned one of three values, which are defined as follows: 0 Applies to all non-qualified produce and is generally presented without the leading "zero" digit. 8 Genetically modified 9 Organic.

So, a five-digit code beginning with 8 signifies a genetically modified product, a five-digit code beginning with 9 signifies an organically grown product, and a five-digit code beginning with 0 (or a four-digit code) signifies a non-qualified (i.e., conventionally grown) product. Thus, the PLU code 4318 is assigned to small Cantaloupe/Muskmelon grown conventionally in the Eastern United States, while an organically grown standard yellow banana would be labeled 94011.

Consumers should be aware, however, that PLU codes are an option which is used for the convenience of suppliers and grocers and not customers, so not all produce (particularly genetically modified varieties) are so labeled, and other sources of information may be better for distinguishing the differences between various forms of produce Consumers can use an application on the Produce

Please search PLU codes: http://plucodes.com/search_wizard.aspx?s=1



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