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Are Spotty Fruits and Vegetables Safe to Eat?

When shopping at the supermarket, many of us make our first stop at the produce section, where we pick through the fruits and vegetables, casting aside anything that's less than perfect. Once home, we clean out the fridge and throw away whatever produce is beginning to develop spots.

You may be surprised to discover, however, that there's actually no need to reject spotty produce. The dark spots and soft patches on these fruits and vegetables are caused by bacteria and fungi that have evolved to attack plant immune systems, which are almost never harmful to humans. Black spots on produce are caused by bacteria, which are transported onto fruits and vegetables by raindrops or other means. Fortunately, these spots won't hurt you; if their appearance is off-putting, simply cut them out and enjoy the rest of the fruit.

While it is only natural to reject unsightly produce, this habit costs us dearly. About 30 percent of the produce on the market goes to waste, which means that the water, land, and energy that went into growing and transporting it are also wasted. Purchasing spotty produce at the supermarket is one way to reduce waste and save money. Many stores offer steeply discounted prices on less-than-perfect fruits and vegetables. It's a great idea to buy these. Just cut out the spots, and you'll be good to go!

(244 words)

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Yellowstone National Park: Mother Nature's Masterpiece

If Mother Nature were an artist, then one of her greatest masterpieces would be Yellowstone National Park. That was my impression when I recently visited the park for the first time. I had been looking forward to spending some time in the great outdoors, and this ancient stretch of land, located in the American Northwest, seemed like the perfect choice.

Yellowstone has around 500 geysers, but its most famous is Old Faithful. Standing on the geyser's viewing platform, I saw jets of boiling water shoot up from the ground into the sky. This happens without fail every 90 minutes or so, and that's how Old Faithful got its name. I didn't think anything could top watching this geyser in action until I saw the Grand Prismatic Spring. It's the third largest hot spring in the world, but what makes it special isn't its size; rather, it's the rainbow of colors that surround its pool of deep-blue water. Nothing in the world can compare with it.

There are a number of trails and walkways wind along the rims and down partway into the canyon. Thus, I went for a walk along a gentle trail that brought me past some wonderful views of Yellowstone's Grand Canyon. The amazing sight of its huge rock walls and winding rivers took my breath away.

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Surprising Geography Facts

Most of us can recall some basic geography knowledge: the highest mountain, the deepest ocean, the biggest continent, etc. But for some unexpected facts about our planet, you'll have to read on!

Antarctica is actually the world's largest desert.

You might think of sand and camels when you hear the word desert, but a desert is officially defined as an area that receives under 250 millimeters of rainfall yearly. Although Antarctica is a continent composed primarily of water, this water is locked in ice. So, with its annual rainfall at around only 170 millimeters, Antarctica easily falls within the definition of a desert.

Russia covers 11 time zones.

This is because of how vast the world's largest country is. Also, notable is that Russia is the only country that borders both Finland (in Northern Europe) and North Korea (in East Asia). Russia also controls an island called Big Diomedes. It sits less than four kilometers from its sister island, Little Diomedes, owned by the United States. Although these two islands are Geographically close, they sit on either side of the International Date Line, so they have a 21-hour time difference!

The Pacific Ocean is shrinking.

Each year, North America and South America are moving westward while Asia and North America get closer. As a result, the Pacific Ocean shrinks by 2 to 3 centimeters.

(237 words)