

Organic Food

Have you noticed more and more organic food products when you do your grocery shopping? Organic food is among one of the fastest growing segments of the US food industry. What does "organic" mean and is organic food really better for you and your children?



WHAT IS ORGANIC FOOD?

- **Organic fruits & vegetables:** no synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or sewage slug, no genetic engineering or irradiation
- **Organic beef and chicken:** not offspring of cloned animals, raised on 100% organic feed, never given growth hormones, antibiotics or other drugs, meat not irradiated
- **Organic milk:** comes from animals fed 100% organic feed for at least the past 12 months, not given antibiotics or growth hormones
- **Organic eggs:** comes from hens that were fed 100% organic feed, never given antibiotics or growth hormones
- **Organic Seafood:** no definition from USDA



NOT NECESSARILY ORGANIC...

- **Cage-free eggs:** come from hens not confined to cages, but may or may not have access to outdoors
- **Free range / free roaming poultry:** animals have access to the outdoors, but for no minimum time
- **Cage free poultry:** means nothing, since most chicken grown for meat are kept indoors but cage free
- **No hormones administered:** may appear on beef labels if producers can document animals were raised without hormones
- **No antibiotics added:** may appear on a label if producer can document animals were raised without antibiotics
- **Natural / all natural:** meat or poultry products contain "no artificial ingredients and are no more than minimally processed"
- **Access to the outdoors:** required for organic animals; however, rules are vague and there is no minimal time



ORGANIC LABELING FOR PACKAGED FOOD

According to the National Organic Program, a food may be labeled as

1. **100% organic** – must be made with 100% organic ingredients
2. **Organic** – must contain at least 95% organic ingredients
3. **Made with organic ingredients** – must contain at least 70% organic ingredients

- All organic labels must show: "Certified organic by ___" or similar phrase, followed by the name of the Certifying Agent.
- The use of **USDA Organic Seal** is voluntary, but only allowed in "100% organic" and "Organic" foods



The USDA Organic seal tells you that a product is at least 95 percent organic.

IS ORGANIC FOOD MORE LIKELY TO....

- **Cause less damage to the environment? YES!** For all organic products including fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products
- **Have less pesticides? YES!** For all organic products
- **Have less foodborne bacteria?** No difference from conventional
- **Have less antibiotics residues?** Neither has any except for conventional veal, little residues is found in conventional meat, poultry, eggs & dairy products
- **Have more nutrients?** Evidence is limited, organic fruits and vegetables may have a little bit more Vitamin C

BENEFITS OF EATING ORGANIC FOOD

- Lowers children's exposure to certain pesticides
- Prevents soil erosion
- Protects water quality
- Supports small farmers
- Better flavor



TIPS ABOUT BUYING & HANDLING PRODUCE

- Buy locally produced food
- Buy produce in season
- Always wash produce before eating
- Trying to decide which produce you should really buy organic? Use the table below to AVOID **"The Dirty Dozen"** – these have the highest pesticide residues! You can feel confident in picking conventional produce listed as **"The Consistently Clean"** – these are the least contaminated with pesticides.



"The Dirty Dozen"	"The Consistently Clean"
☹️ Peaches	Papaya 😊
Apples	Broccoli
Sweet bell pepper	Cabbage
Celery	Bananas
Nectarines	Kiwi
Strawberries	Sweet peas (frozen)
☹️ Cherries	Asparagus 😊
Pears	Mango
Grapes (imported)	pineapples
Spinach	Sweet corn (frozen)
☹️ Lettuce	Avocado 😊
Potatoes	Onions
"The Dirty Dozen"	"The Consistently Clean"

Websites to visit for more information:

USDA Organic Program
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexE.htm>

Organic Consumers Association
<http://www.organicconsumers.org/>

Organic Food Production
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/ofp/>

USDA Organic Certification
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/lut/p/s.7_0_A/7_0_10B?navid=ORGANIC_CERTIFICATIO&navtype=RT&parentnav=AGRICULTURE

Environmental Working group
<http://www.foodnews.org/>

