

ORGANIC FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What Does “Organic” Mean?

Organic foods are produced without the use of conventional pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic farming encourages the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water.



Labeling Standards

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established an organic certification program that requires all organic foods to meet strict government standards. They have identified three categories for labeling organic products. The USDA organic seal tells you that a product is at least 95 percent organic.



- “100% Organic”: Product must contain 100 percent organic ingredients.
- “Organic”: At least 95 percent of ingredients are organically produced.
- “Made with Organic Ingredients”: At least 70 percent of ingredients are organic. The remaining 30 percent must come from the USDA’s approved list.

Benefits of organic food include...

- Minimize the risk of exposure to pesticides.
- Reduce intake of food additives, including preservatives, artificial sweeteners, colorings and flavorings, and monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Benefit the environment by reducing pollution and conserving water and soil quality.




Which Are Worth Your Organic Food Dollar?

Organic foods tend to cost more than their conventional counterparts. So which foods are worth the added expense? It has been found that even after you wash certain fruits and vegetables, they still contain much higher levels of pesticide residue than others. Researchers at the Environmental Working Group (EWG) have analyzed more than 100,000 U.S. government pesticide test results and developed the “Dirty Dozen” fruits and vegetables, as well as the “Consistently Clean”.

The “Dirty Dozen” lists the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables – these are the ones you should buy organic as often as possible.

Dirty Dozen		
1		Apples
2		Celery
3		Strawberries
4		Peaches
5		Spinach
6		Nectarines - imported
7		Grapes - imported
8		Sweet bell peppers
9		Potatoes
10		Blueberries - domestic
11		Lettuce
12		Kale/collard greens

The “Consistently Clean” lists the least contaminated fruits and vegetables – these are not necessary to buy organic.

Consistently Clean		
1		Onions
2		Sweet Corn
3		Pineapples
4		Avocado
5		Asparagus
6		Sweet peas
7		Mangoes
8		Eggplant
9		Cantaloupe - domestic
10		Kiwi
11		Cabbage
12		Watermelon

*Source: EWG

Organic vs. Local Food – Which is Better?

There are benefits and drawbacks to both organic and local food. While organic food is grown using environmentally friendly methods, when it travels long distances to market, this creates pollution which outweighs the positive environmental effects of organic farming. Locally grown food does not travel long distances to market and therefore helps reduce pollution, but local food is not necessarily grown organically. In general, when local food is in season, both organic and local foods are great choices.

For more information on organic food:

Organic.org www.organic.org

National Organic Program www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop

Environmental Working Group www.ewg.org