



Nutrition *fact sheet*

Organic Food

Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation. Before a product can be labeled “organic,” a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too.



The USDA developed strict labeling rules to help consumers know the exact organic content of the food they buy. (At least 95% of the product needs to be organically grown to be considered organic.) Look for this label to determine if the foods you’re buying are organic.

Natural isn’t organic! This list can help you make sense of current label lingo:

- **100% organic:** No synthetic ingredients are allowed by law.
- **Organic:** At least 95% of ingredients are organically produced.
- **Made with Organic Ingredients:** At least 70% of ingredients are organic; the other 30% are from a list approved by the USDA.
- **Free-range or free-roaming:** Animals had an undetermined amount of daily outdoor access. This label does not provide much information about the product.
- **Natural or All Natural:** Doesn’t mean organic. No standard definition, except for meat and poultry products, which may not contain any artificial flavoring, colors, chemical preservatives, or synthetic ingredients. Claims aren’t checked.
- **Sustainable:** Such products are grown according to the same principles as organic products but are not certified by the government.

Is organic more nutritious?

As of now, there is no conclusive evidence to say that organic produce has more nutritional value than other conventionally produced foods. Organic food differs from conventionally produced food only in the way it is grown, handled, and processed.

If you are concerned about consuming pesticides, choosing organic foods is a logical choice. Another thing you can do to decrease your consumption of pesticides is to practice the tips below:

Reduce your intake of pesticides on fruits and veggies by:

- Washing (use hot water and rub with your hands but skip detergent or soap) and rinsing
- Peeling (however, valuable nutrients may be lost)
- Discarding the outer leaves of leafy veggies
- Eating a variety of foods from a variety of sources to provide a mix of nutrients and reduce the likelihood of exposure to a single pesticide).
- Shopping at farmers markets and by talking with local farmers, you can learn about their product methods. They may be following organic standards without the certification.

What fruits and veggies typically are high or low in pesticides?

Visit www.foodnews.org for the Shopper's Guide to Pesticides.

Cutting the High Cost of Organic Foods

- Comparison shop (and look for produce in season)
- Buy locally produced organic foods (check farmers' markets)
- Buy a share in a community-supported organic farm to get a regular supply of seasonal organic produce
- Order by mail
- Skip purchasing organic seafood for now - organic certification standards have not been adopted for it yet