

Organic Food



What is organic?

Organic is food that has been produced using animal and environmentally friendly farming, with methods and controls that are strictly regulated. Artificial fertilisers are banned and no antibiotics, hormones or other growth enhancers should ever be used. Animal welfare should be of the highest standard with plenty of space to roam free.

Why choose organic?

Along with it being better for the environment by restricting the use of artificial chemicals, fertilisers and pesticides, and having the knowledge that animals have higher welfare, buying organic ensures that you can trust the food that you consume. Organic foods do not contain controversial additives such as aspartame, tartrazine and MSG, they are also a great way of avoiding GM crops and ingredients as these are all banned under organic standards (1). Buying organic meat also ensures that humans do not consume the antibiotics and growth hormones given to animals during commercial farming, which could disrupt human hormone balance, causing developmental problems, interfering with the reproductive system, and even possibly leading to the development of some cancers (2)

The Clean 15 & The Dirty Dozen

Organic food can sometimes be expensive to purchase. The Environmental Working Group have put together a "Shoppers guide to pesticides in produce" (3) which helps individuals make informed choices about the produce they purchase. The Dirty Dozen highlight the common non-organic fruit and vegetables that have the highest levels of pesticides and other harmful chemicals after washing and should therefore, where possible, be purchased organically. The Clean 15 identifies those that have the lowest number following washing that are not always necessary to purchase organic.

The Clean 15 On a budget, choose these conventionally. (Listed from lowest pesticide content)	The Dirty Dozen Always buy these organic. (Listed from highest pesticide content to least)
1. Onions 	1. Apples 
2. Sweet Corn 	2. Celery 
3. Pineapple 	3. Strawberries 
4. Avocado 	4. Peaches 
5. Asparagus 	5. Spinach 
6. Sweet Peas 	6. Nectarines 
7. Mangoes 	7. Grapes 
8. Eggplant 	8. Sweet Bell Peppers 
9. Cantaloupe 	9. Potatoes 
10. Kiwi 	10. Blueberries 
11. Cabbage 	11. Lettuce 
12. Watermelon 	12. Kale/Collard Greens 
13. Sweet Potatoes 	
14. Grapefruit 	
15. Mushrooms 	

Source: Environmental Working Group 2011

How to clean organic fruit and vegetables

Organic fruit and vegetables may not be covered in pesticides but they still need washing to rid them of unwanted pests like worms and parasites and even their eggs. This can be done using a small amount of apple cider vinegar in water and leaving the produce to soak for a little while (not too long for soft fruits!). Finally rinse well with plain water and dry. Apple Cider Vinegar can be bought at Bobby's Healthy Shop - <http://www.bobbyshealthyshop.co.uk/Apple-Cider-Vinegar.php>

Where to buy organic food

Organic produce is widely available now at supermarkets, specialist shops and on-line box delivery companies. It can be purchased directly from the farmers themselves via farmers markets and box schemes and via food buying cooperatives that are springing up all over the country.

Online suppliers of fruit, vegetables, dairy and meat include:

<http://www.realfoods.co.uk>
www.abelandcole.co.uk
www.riverford.co.uk/

Organic wholefoods can be purchased through;

<http://www.naturallygoodfood.co.uk/>
<http://www.sumawholesale.coop/>

For further information on purchasing organic produce directly from the farmer and to find a local farmers market visit <http://www.soilassociation.org/buyorganic/buyfromfarmers>

To find a local food buying cooperative visit <http://www.sustainweb.org/foodcoops/finder/>

Organic certification

Organic producers must be registered with an approved organic control body and abide by their standards to be able to market their produce as "Organic". These include The Soil Association and Biodynamic Agricultural Association.

Look out for their logos on products.



**Biodynamic
Association**
vital soil, vital food



References:

- (1) <http://www.soilassociation.org/Whatisorganic?> Accessed 14 May 2014
- (2) <http://www.sustainabletable.org> Accessed 14 May 2014
- (3) <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/> Accessed 14 May 2014