

QuickBites



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Organics is a growing industry in the United States. This is especially apparent in the produce aisle. Today, nearly all supermarkets offer a variety of organically grown fruits and vegetables. Sales of organic produce in 2013 increased by 12% over 2012 sales. In fact, 35¢ of every dollar spent on produce goes for organic produce. The decision about going organic is a personal one. Consumers need to weigh lower cost and greater availability of conventionally grown produce against the possible health and environmental benefits of buying organic.

Explore the Shopping Guides at right and the Q & A on page 2 to help you decide if you'll be putting organic fruits and vegetables into your shopping cart.

Organic Produce

The Environmental Working Group (EWG), a nonprofit consumer group, has looked at data from the USDA Pesticide Testing Program and the Food and Drug Administration to create two lists to help guide grocery shoppers who are concerned about pesticide levels in fruits and vegetables. Their yearly awareness campaign has helped drive many consumers to organic.

EWG's Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce

The Clean Fifteen		The Dirty Dozen	
These fruits and vegetables tend to have the lowest levels of pesticide residue, so are not as high a priority when buying organic.		These fruits and vegetables tend to have the highest levels of pesticide residue even after being washed and peeled. Make these a priority when buying organic.	
	Asparagus		Apples
	Avocado		Bell Peppers
	Cabbage		Celery
	Cantaloupe		Cherries
	Corn		Chiles
	Eggplant		Cucumbers
	Grapefruit		Grapes
	Kiwi		Nectarines (imported)
	Mango		Peaches
	Mushrooms		Potatoes
	Onions		Spinach
	Papayas		Strawberries
	Peas (frozen)		
	Pineapple		
	Sweet Potatoes		

Source: www.ewg.org

Answering Your Questions About Organic Produce



Q Why should I worry about farming and pesticide use?

A Pesticides are toxic. They have been created to kill insects and fungi that are considered “pests.” For humans, exposure to high levels of pesticides can cause skin irritation, nervous system problems and hormone disruption. Some types of pesticides may contribute to the die off of honeybees and other pollinators.

Q What if I can’t afford to buy organic fruits and vegetables? Should I avoid everything on the Dirty Dozen list?

A No. Eat your fruits and vegetables! The health benefits of eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables are well known. Eating conventionally grown produce is far better than skipping produce altogether. Also, the price gap between organic and conventional produce has narrowed as sales have grown. Organic packaged greens are often comparable in price to conventional packaged greens.

Q What if I wash and peel my fruits and vegetables before eating them? Won’t that reduce my exposure to pesticides?

A Plants absorb pesticides systemically, meaning the pesticide residue isn’t only found on the outside layer of the fruit or vegetable. All fruits and vegetables should be washed before handling and eating however.

Q I try to avoid genetically modified foods (aka GMOs or genetically modified organisms). What fruits and vegetables might be genetically modified?

A By definition, all fruits and vegetables labeled “organic” are GMO-free. And so are most conventionally grown fruits and vegetables. A few varieties of zucchini, crookneck squash and sweet corn may be from genetically modified seed. Some papayas from Hawaii are from GMO plants.

Q Do organic fruits and vegetables have higher levels of nutrients compared to conventionally grown produce?

A A large 2012 study from Stanford University found no real difference in nutrients levels between organic and conventional produce. Some smaller studies have found organic produce to be more nutritious than conventionally grown. The best way to ensure you’re getting enough vitamins and micronutrients from your fruits and vegetables? Eat plenty of them!

Resources: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash/www.dashdiet.org>

Pineapple-Mango Relish

Makes 3 to 3 ½ cups

Pineapples and mangos are especially welcome in early spring when fresh, local fruit is still weeks away. Serve this lively relish with roast pork, chicken or seafood. Or, finely chop the fruits, call it salsa and serve with fresh veggies and chips.

INGREDIENTS

½ fresh pineapple, trimmed and diced small (about 2 ½ cups)
1 ripe mango, peeled and diced small
1 jalapeño or other hot chile, seeded and minced
2 scallions, sliced thin
1 tablespoon honey
Grated zest and juice of 1 lime
Pinch of salt
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint, parsley or cilantro

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients except fresh herbs. Cover and chill. Toss with fresh herb just before serving.

Recipe source: Healthy Living Kitchens



NUTRITION INFO

(per ¼ cup serving)
40 Calories
0.2g Fat
0g Saturated fat
0g Protein
10g Carbohydrate
1g Fiber
40mg Sodium