

NUTRIFAX[©]

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Should you buy organic?

Organic products are defined as “processed without the use of most conventional, pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation”. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy are from animals raised in a natural setting (access to outdoors, water, etc.) and not treated with antibiotics.



Organics are not guaranteed to be safer, healthier, more nutritious, or more flavorful than conventional food items. Labeling laws assure consumers what is organic. Products with a green and white organic seal meet government standards.

- **“100% Organic”**-no synthetic ingredients.
- **“Organic”** - 95% organic ingredients.
- **“Made with organic ingredients”** - 70% minimum organic ingredients (does not get organic seal).
- **Some food products advertise** - “all natural”, “free range”, or “hormone free”, none are indicative of an organic product.

Facts to consider:

- Organic produce has less chemical residues than conventional. However, organic farming uses manure as a fertilizer, which has the potential to contain dangerous microbes such as E.coli spores; organic produce may contain chemical residues absorbed from groundwater and rain. Organics are often imported from outside the US where there is no regulation.

- US organic and conventional foods are generally held to the same quality and safety standards. Certified organic farmers must adhere to rigid sanitation guidelines and comply with government standards.
- Organic foods are not treated with waxes or preservatives and may spoil faster.
- Organic foods cost an average of 50% more due to labor intensive farming techniques and government regulations.
- Foods with highest pesticide residue: peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, pears, grapes, spinach, lettuce, and potatoes.
- Foods with lowest pesticide residue: papayas, broccoli, cabbage, bananas, kiwi, frozen sweet peas, asparagus, mangoes, pineapple, frozen sweet corn, avocados, and onions.

Whether organic or conventional:

- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Always purchase from a reputable source.
- Buy local produce, the fresher the product, the higher the nutritional value.
- Thoroughly wash all produce under running water (even with inedible skin).
- Dispose of cut produce out of refrigeration for more than four hours.

USDA.gov & Today's Dietitian

**Food and Nutrition Services
can assist in providing nutrition information.
Call 703-813-4800 and ask for a Registered
Dietitian.**