



# Food Quality *Guide*

WANT TO UPGRADE YOUR  
HEALTH? TRY UPGRADING THE  
QUALITY OF YOUR FOOD. THIS  
GUIDE WILL SHOW YOU HOW.

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NUTRITION

# ORGANIC VS NON-ORGANIC

## *What's the difference?*

Buying organic used to mean taking a trip to a health food store. Times have changed though, and today organic foods have gone mainstream.

But are organic foods really worth all the hype? Well, here are a few ways organic foods differ from conventional foods:

### Conventional Foods

- Use synthetic fertilizers to add nutrients to soil
- Use synthetic pesticides like glyphosate to control pests
- May use sewage sludge as fertilizer
- Can genetically modify food (aka GMO)
- Feed farm animals antibiotics or growth hormones

### Organic Foods

- Use plant rotation to improve nutrient levels in soil
- Use insects (like ladybugs) or insect traps for pest control
- Use natural pesticides approved for organic farming
- Use compost, plant waste, or farm animal manure to improve soil quality
- Cannot feed farm animals hormones or antibiotics

Farmers must follow strict guidelines to get the 'organic' stamp of approval. If you see any food products with the 'USDA organic' seal, it means at least 95% of their ingredients are organic.

Organic foods do cost more. But they come with many benefits, including:

- Higher nutrient profile
- Better for the environment
- Lower levels of heavy metals like cadmium
- Lower pesticide residue



# PESTICIDES 101

## *What you need to know*

Farmers use pesticides to **control weeds** and **kill bugs and microorganisms**. The problem is, many helpful microorganisms are killed in the process. Over time, this **degrades soil** quality. Pesticides also create toxic runoff that lands in our water supply.

But pesticides aren't just harmful to the environment. They're harmful to your health too.

### How Pesticides Affect Your Health

#### **Pesticide exposure is linked with:**

- Increased risk of cancer
- Impaired nervous system function
- Endocrine system disruption
- Hormonal imbalances
- Respiratory problems
- Skin & eye irritation
- Decreased fertility
- Gut microbiome imbalances (meaning the 'bad' bugs outnumber the 'good' ones)

We ingest pesticides through our skin, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and yes... our food.

Choosing more organic foods is an easy way to dial down your pesticide exposure.

If eating all organic isn't in your budget, no worries! Do the best you can... and always wash your fruits and veggies thoroughly.

Also, be sure to check out the Environmental Working Group's '[Dirty Dozen](#)' and '[Clean 15](#)'.

It lists which fruits and veggies have the **highest and lowest pesticide residue**.

That way you know which ones to buy organic, and when conventional will do.



# ARTIFICIAL FOOD ADDITIVES

## *What you need to know*

Processed foods are filled with artificial food additives. These synthetic ingredients extend shelf life and make foods more appealing, but they can be harmful to your health.

### ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

Added to extend shelf life and prevent spoilage and bacterial growth

Examples:

- sodium benzoate
- sorbic acid
- sulfites
- nitrates
- Nitrites
- propylene glycol
- BHA
- Carrageenan

### ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS & FLAVORS

Added to enhance taste or mimic the flavors of natural ingredients

Examples:

- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Aspartame
- Sucralose
- Yeast extract

### ARTIFICIAL COLORS

Added to make food look more attractive and appealing

Examples:

- Red #3
- Red #40
- Yellow #5
- Yellow #6
- Blue #1
- Blue #6

Food additives have been linked with **weight gain, cancer, endocrine disruption, hyperactivity, allergies,** and more. So how can you avoid these harmful additives?

It's pretty simple. When shopping, fill your cart with mostly whole foods like fruits, veggies, meat, fish, legumes, whole grains, nuts, or seeds. And when choosing packaged foods, opt for ones that are minimally processed with short ingredient lists.

# WHAT MEAT LABELS MEAN

## *Breaking it down*

Between grass-fed, free range, & organic, shopping for meat can be confusing! Just like with produce, meat quality can vary quite a bit. So let's clear up the confusion...

### Conventional

- Fed grain to help them fatten up quickly
- Raised in factory farms
- Kept in confined spaces
- Often fed antibiotics and growth hormones

### Grass-Fed

- Raised on a diet of mostly grass and forage throughout their life
- Some may be fed grain during the finishing stage before slaughter

### Grass-Finished

- Fed grass from start to finish for their entire lives



Grass fed and grass finished meat is not only more humane, it's leaner and healthier too.

**Compared to grain fed, grass fed beef is shown to have:**

- Up to five times **more omega-3 fatty acids**, a type of healthy fat that supports heart health
- Higher levels of **vitamin A, vitamin E & antioxidants**
- Twice the **conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)**, a type of fatty acid linked with weight loss

# WHAT MEAT LABELS MEAN

## *Continued...*

Here's a breakdown of other food labels you may encounter and what they mean:

- **Natural:** Contains no artificial colorings, flavors, or preservatives
- **Organic:** Fed organic feed, have outdoor access & given no antibiotics or growth hormones throughout entire life
- **Cage free:** Hens raised in open barns, but usually still overcrowded conditions
- **Free range:** Hens have outdoor access throughout growth cycle
- **Pasture raised:** Same as free range, but hens get more space
- **Farm raised fish:** Raised in tanks and have higher levels of contaminants
- **Wild caught:** Fish caught from a natural habitat that eat a natural diet

The gist? Meat, poultry, and fish raised in factory farms live in unhealthy conditions. This translates into poorer quality products.

Here is a helpful cheat sheet for choosing the best quality animal protein:



### **BEEF**

Choose grass fed & organic



### **POULTRY**

Choose pasture raised and organic



### **PORK**

Choose pasture raised & organic



### **FISH**

Choose sustainably raised or wild caught fish



### **EGGS**

Choose pasture raised, free range organic, or grass fed