



Creating Community
Changing Lives

Should you buy organic?

Everything from cookies to carrots is available in an organic version, and many parents are wondering if organic products are healthier for their families than conventionally grown foods. This article will explore what organic means, and explain how to choose organic foods wisely.

Exploring "organic"

Organic is not a health claim. Rather, it's a term used to define an alternative way to grow food. Organic farming methods sidestep many of the problems of modern food production such as poor soil quality and pesticide use by:

- * Avoiding synthetic fertilizers
- * Reducing pest populations using natural predators
- * Using plant and animal compost to keep the soil fertile
- * Rotating crops to avoid pest buildup

Good for the planet and...

Organic farming practices are good for the environment. But, are organic foods better for your health? Many studies have examined whether organic foods contain more vitamins, minerals and antioxidants than their conventionally grown counterparts. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this question. Accurate comparisons cannot be made between organic and conventional foods since they may be grown with differing outdoor temperatures and soil quality, and varying amounts of sunlight and water. Most studies show that there is no difference in nutrient content between organic and conventional crops, while a few studies have reported that organically grown fruits and vegetables have higher levels of vitamin C and antioxidants.

What about pesticides?

Health Canada is responsible for approving pesticide use and setting appropriate maximum residue limits (MRL) in our food supply. Tests conducted in 2007 showed that more than 99% of our fruits and vegetables fell well below Canada's MRL. No pesticide residues were detected in 90% of the fruits and vegetables that were tested.

If you're still concerned about trace levels of pesticides, consider this: The US-based Environmental Working Group compiled data from 87,000 pesticide residue tests on vegetables and fruit. They suggest that people can lower their pesticide exposure by almost 80% by choosing organically grown:

- * Peaches
- * Apples
- * Sweet peppers
- * Celery
- * Nectarines
- * Strawberries
- * Cherries
- * Kale
- * Lettuce
- * Imported grapes
- * Carrots
- * Pears

The working group also found that some conventionally grown foods are so low in pesticides that it doesn't pay to buy the organic versions. The consistently clean foods include:

- * Onion
- * Avocado
- * Frozen sweet corn
- * Pineapple
- * Mango
- * Asparagus
- * Frozen sweet peas
- * Kiwi
- * Cabbage
- * Eggplant

Choose organic foods wisely

Unhealthy foods don't become healthier if they are made from organic ingredients. For example, shortbread cookies made with organic butter, sugar and flour are still high in fat, sugar and refined carbohydrates. Being organic does not make them better for your personal health – just better for the planet. The same is true for organic cream, fatty meat and shortening. Saturated and trans fats clog arteries and increase the risk of heart disease – whether they are organic or not. Don't be fooled by organic ice cream, chips or baked goods. Remember, organic is not a health claim, it's a farming method. Buying organic food is a personal choice, based on a food's availability, price, taste, and personal values of the purchaser. What's most important is getting your kids to eat a balanced diet each day. <http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=pv13leNWJwE&b=5063573&ct=7598491>

World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated every year from 1 to 7 August in more than 170 countries to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world. It commemorates the Innocenti Declaration made by WHO and UNICEF policy-makers in August 1990 to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is the best way to provide newborns with the nutrients they need. WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding until a baby is six months old, and continued breastfeeding with the addition of nutritious complementary foods for up to two years or beyond.

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/annual/world_breastfeeding_week/en/index.html



August 2012 Newsletter

Move over Quinoa, Freekeh's the new Superfood to eat

Freekeh is the new quinoa! Not only is it fun to say but it packs a nutritious punch, too. There's a new grain in town making a play for superfood supremacy. Freekeh (pronounced free-ka) has already netted universal praise from the likes of chef-celeb Jamie Oliver, Dr.Oz and even Oprah herself.

These compact, pistachio-hued kernels are also known as greenwheat or farik, which in Aramaic means "the rubbed one" and have an earthy, smoky flavour — it's as if they've found a way to capture the essence of a dense and creamy rice-dish prepared over an open campfire. Freekeh may be an up-and-comer to our North American pantries, but it's actually an ancient grain that's been ubiquitous to Middle Eastern diets since Biblical times.

Freekeh is made from young durum wheat, which seems like nothing special or rare here in Canada. However, the magic happens in its production and the roasting process. The wheat is harvested while the grains are still young and green, when the seeds are soft and moisture-dense; it is then piled and sun-dried. Next, the piles are set on fire and burned! Finally, the kernels are thrashed or rubbed to make their flavour, texture and colour uniform.

Thankfully, an Australian company called Greenwheat Freekeh is leading the industry in both the research and development of modern technologies to process it.

But one caveat dear reader: now, I've fallen and fallen hard for this toasty little grain and the diversity it brings to any dish — it has the flexibility to replace rice, couscous, pasta, you name it — however finding a box is akin to, well...looking for a kernel in a wheat field. You may have to do some legwork or phone around to specialty grocers or health food shops. Your best bet though, and where I've been getting my stash, is from stores that specialize in Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean foods.

I promise you it's worth the hunt; here are some other reasons why freekeh really may dethrone quinoa as the reigning new superfood superstar.

Five health benefits of freekeh

1. Because the grain is harvested while it's still young it has up to four times the fibre of brown rice.
2. Freekeh provides more protein than mature wheat and most other grains.
3. Freekeh is a source of both prebiotics and probiotics and therefore contributes to bowel health.
4. According to the book *101 Healthiest Foods*, it's rich in iron, zinc, potassium and calcium.
5. Freekeh promotes weight loss by being low on the glycemic index. Low GI foods not only fill you up faster, but they also help lower your risk of heart disease and help to manage diabetes.

Cooking with freekeh

Amp up the nutrition factor in any recipe or make freekeh as a side to any of your favourite meat, poultry, seafood or tofu dishes. You prepare it similarly to rice.

<http://www.chatelaine.com/en/article/39555--move-over-quinoa-freekeh-s-the-new-superfood-to-eat>



FREEKEH 'Tabouli' SALAD

* 1 cup cracked freekeh * 2 1/2 CUPS WATER * 3 cloves smashed garlic

1. Bring freekeh, garlic and water to a boil. 2. Lower heat & cover.
3. Cook for 20-25 minutes. 4. Turn off heat and rest for 10 minutes.

SALAD BASE - mix together thoroughly:

* cooked cracked freekeh * 2 cups chopped tomatoes * 2 cups chopped flat parsley
* 1 1/2 cups chopped red onion * 1 large shallot chopped * 1 large clove garlic chopped

DRESSING:

* 1tsp fish sauce * 1tsp light sodium soy or tamari sauce * 1/8 tsp turmeric
* ¼ cup red wine vinegar * 5 tbsps of fresh squeezed lemon juice * Dash of cayenne pepper



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