

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

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Is Organic Actually Better?

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With the growing popularity of organic and health food stores, more and more people want to know the benefits of choosing organic foods. More importantly, they want to know that they are getting the bang for their buck with the higher prices of these items. Here is a basic explanation of possible benefits and information on how to find organic foods.

The Purpose of Organic

The true purpose of organic goes far beyond looking at just the food that we eat. It is a term that describes an entire "production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people." A farmer's farming practices are key to whether the food they produce can be considered organic. Generally, they aim to



- recycle and renew resources to decrease pollution and protect our environment,
- maintain the health of the soil for long-term farming,
- care for the health and needs of livestock, and
- maintain natural diversity in our food and ecosystem.

The Benefits of Organic

Consumers are often discouraged by the prices of organic foods, but these prices go towards environmental benefits which would otherwise cost us through our tax dollars. For example, organic farming avoids the use of artificial chemicals in our system which can reduce water pollution. This can help reduce public expenses for intensive water treatments. Organic farming practices also give farmers safer working conditions and can decrease the number of pesticide-related diseases and accidents. This can help keep our tax dollars down for related health care. Over a long-term, organic farming can provide many benefits that reaches beyond the single consumer.

For the consumer's health, there is limited evidence showing any nutritional and health differences between people who eat organic and non-organic foods. Although some studies have found organic foods to be slightly higher in certain nutrients, the differences compared to non-organic foods are not large enough to be considered of any importance. Some consumer may notice a taste difference between organic and non-organic foods, but this has also been hard to prove in scientific studies so far.

Finding Organic

If you decide to choose organic for any of the reasons above, this is becoming an easier task in Canada. Since 2009, foods marketed as organic, or that carry a certified organic logo, must meet the Canada Organic Standards. What is slightly confusing is that there are many logos instead of the same one across the country. The right side of the page lists some of these logos, but the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website has a list of all the approved organizations that can certify organic foods.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

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Creamy Corn and Ham Soup

Corn is one of the top three crops that have been genetically-modified. At the present time in Canada, buying certified organic food is the only way to know that you are avoiding genetically-modified foods or ingredients. Try this recipe with organic corn for a delicious lunch this fall!



Makes 2 servings (1 serving = 1 ¼ cup)

Ingredients:

1 tbsp	olive oil
1/2-750g pkg (approx.3 cups)	frozen corn niblets, defrosted
1/2	sweet onion, chopped
1 1/2 cups	milk, 2%
1/3 cup	ham, lean, diced small
1/3	red bell pepper, diced small
1 1/2 tbsp	fresh chives, chopped
1/8 tsp	salt

Directions:

1. In a pot, heat ½ tbsp olive oil over medium-high heat. Sauté the corn and onion for 5 until soft, stirring.
2. Reduce to medium heat and add milk. Continue to stir until smoke rises from the milk.
3. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer 10 minutes. Stir occasionally.
4. With a slotted spoon, strain out ½ cup of corn niblets and set aside. Puree the remaining soup and serve into bowls.
5. Topping: In a frying pan, heat remaining ½ tbsp olive oil over medium heat. Add ham and red pepper and cook 5 minutes. Add the reserved corn and chives and cook for one more minute. Spoon topping into centre of soup and serve.

Nutrition information (per serving): 374 calories, Fat 13g (20% DV), Carbohydrate 54g (18% DV), Protein 18g, Sodium 424mg (18% DV), Fibre 5g (18% DV), Sugar 18g, Calcium 244mg (22% DV)