

Title:

What the Heck is Organic Food, Anyway?

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675

Summary:

A breif overview or organic food, including what it is and what it's benefits are.

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Article Body:

"Organic" has of late become such a catchphrase that it has entered the vernacular of the everyday American to almost everyday use. It's a word of which many people believe they know the meaning, but few do. A few seconds of hard contemplation produces a myriad of questions: What is unique about organic food as opposed to the garden-variety supermarket wares? And what about organic baby food? Is it significantly different or superior? What are the benefits? Can I trust the labels? Below run some frequently asked questions and brief answers; just doing my part to assist in your education...

What is unique about organic food as opposed to the garden-variety supermarket wares?

Essentially the differences on your plate take place in two spheres: additives and preservatives. The former can mean anything that changes the quality of the food in color, consistency, taste and characteristics. The latter is anything that keeps food fresh for longer amounts of time and is typically some sort of sodium product.

Many additives, particularly food dyes, have been attacked as toxins. A handful of dyes have been made illegal on the American market due to reasons of human health. As the American diet is already dangerously high in sodium, there is no need for the consumption of further salts as preservatives.

On the farm level, the differences become even more dramatic. Organic food

contains no genetically modified organisms, has no trace of poisonous pesticides and is grown in environmentally safe soil free of chemicals.

And what about organic baby food? Is it significantly different or superior?

Organic baby food boasts all the same advantages as regular organic food listed above. Since baby's body is much more sensitive to toxins than is an adult's, the benefits of avoiding additives increase substantially. The elimination of additives and preservatives in organic baby food also quite simply means that there are fewer ingredients to which baby may develop allergies and that digestion of organic baby food is easier.

Organic baby food is quick-cooked so that fewer nutrients will be lost, an unfortunate by-product of cooking food in general. Most organic baby food is salt- and sugar-free, and what baby needs more of either?

There have been recently claims that organic baby food is lacking in iron at a 20 percent clip. This can be reduced, however, by making your own or feeding baby more iron-rich food.

What are the benefits?

Well, this is the selling point of organic product. Less salt means smaller chance of kidney, liver or blood pressure problems. Fewer toxins in your diet mean avoidance of certain industrial maladies. Preservatives have been shown to be dangerous (even potentially lethal) to your health, but only after occupying space in products for decades. Organic ingredients make it possible for the average consumer to understand exactly what they are eating. And, once you've experienced this phenomenon, you are unlikely to look at non-organic food labels the same way again.

Can I trust the labels?

This one is tricky. Just as there are zillions of lobbyists and concerned citizen action groups, there are zillions of corporate employees and attorneys finding ways around existing law. Simple research helps a lot to cut through the claims and counterclaims. Some information may surprise you.

For example, if a baby food label is marked "chicken," this means that chicken must comprise as little as forty percent of the ingredients' total mass. If two

ingredients are listed, the first need only make up ten percent and in the second less is allowable. It can get depressing.

The way I figure it, check the website. If it's loaded with flash, slippery promotional promises and a dearth of solid information, become suspicious. In general, small is better. With babies of six to nine months, a few vegetables and simple grain products a week suffices in tandem with breast milk or formula - a very small amount of organic product to find. Plus, a large supply is made up in little time at home.

Does organic food taste better?

Yes.