

[Free download] A Field Guide to Buying Organic

A Field Guide to Buying Organic


Luddene Perry, Dan Schultz

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DON'T GO SHOPPING FOR ORGANIC FOOD WITHOUT THIS BOOK


A Field Guide to **Buying**
ORGANIC

- An aisle-by-aisle guide to every organic product you're likely to find in the supermarket
- Which organic foods are worth the cost, and which conventional foods you can buy with confidence
- How to read labels and seals—including those that aren't regulated
- Organics and your health, the economy, and the environment



Luddene Perry and Dan Schultz

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Luddene Perry, Dan Schultz : A Field Guide to Buying Organic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Field Guide to Buying Organic:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent for people that want a more indepth source of ...By IkeVery complete guide, not a quick overview.Excellent for people that want a more indepth source of information.12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Empowered with the knowledgeBy GraceBefore I started reading this book, I wondered whether to start on organic foods or not (as I don't like spending money). After reading it I now

have a plan of transforming step by step. I understand why the previous review says it's confusing—it gives so many facts from all aspects and it contains lots of scientific technical details that even a biology PhD student like me doesn't feel comfortable with. But this is exactly what makes it believable. I've read a few thin books advocating organic foods that cite only evidence supporting their idea. I'm sick of them—superficial works backed by pure financial interests. This book, on the contrary, presents (to the best of their capabilities) impartial data. This is honesty. The book is more than "best bets" charts that are concluded from Total Diet study. I don't any more take for granted things I eat. Being health conscious, I won't stop at this book alone and will certainly continue to monitor future trends. Overall, I feel this book is well worth the read. 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A Field Guide to Buying Organic By Stephanie S. This book has been SO helpful in deciding which foods are worth buying organic and which ones you can safely buy conventional. I was planning on switching to all or mostly organic, but my budget just wouldn't have allowed that, so I picked up this book at the library to help me decide what to buy. For example, I'm going to keep buying regular skim milk because there were nearly no pesticide residues found in it, but because pesticides hold in fats, there were a lot found in whole milk, cheese, and butter, because of the fat, so I plan to buy those organic. It also made me realize hormones in milk and meat were probably not as much of a problem as organic advocates would have you believe. I plan to buy organic fruits and veggies, and I'm still deciding on meats. These authors don't recommend all organic, but they don't seem to be in the pocket of the big farms OR the organic growers. They form their own conclusions and opinions. Great and helpful book.

The definitive guide to healthful, affordable food shopping in the Organic Age from a pioneer in the organic movement. What does it really mean when a food is labeled organic? While many of us believe there are good reasons to buy organic, what exactly are they? The authors of this indispensable handbook sift fact from fiction to help you make informed decisions that are right for you. Here is everything you need to know, including when paying more for organic is worth it and when it's not. A Field Guide to Buying Organic provides you with: Self-tests to determine your current organic-shopping habits and the type of organic shopper you want to become. A primer on organic food standards, labels, and seals. Health and quality comparisons of organically grown versus conventionally grown produce. An aisle-by-aisle supermarket guide to information about the most popular organic produce, dairy, meat and poultry, baked goods, nuts, seeds, grains, convenience foods, and drinks. The truth about pesticides, hormones, genetically modified foods (GMOs), toxins, and bacteria. Plus illustrations featuring product logos and contact information, and a fascinating overview of the evolution of organics. From the Trade Paperback edition.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Perry, a teacher and consultant to the organic food industry, and freelance writer Schultz skillfully guide readers through the complexities of organic food production, distribution and consumption to help informed purchasing decisions. They begin by detailing the history of organic farming; federal regulations and the U.S.D.A. certification process; nonorganic practices of concern for consumers (pesticides, hormones, genetically engineered organisms and crops, etc.); and the effects of current production methods on the environment and society. Then, they give an aisle-by-aisle guide to supermarket and health food store shelves. Useful tools such as label and ingredient comparisons, a brand guide, explanations of processing methods will allow readers to confidently choose between conventional and organic products. In each section, the authors offer quizzes for readers to pinpoint the concerns that drive their choices: health, economic, environmental, social or culinary. Readers whose main motivation is to safeguard health may be surprised to learn that some organic products don't have clear advantages over conventional ones, while those who seek the freshest, best-performing products may be inspired to select organic items more frequently. Similarly, price-conscious shoppers will discover that some organic products do offer definite advantages for only a few cents more. The authors' balanced approach should appeal to those committed to organics and skeptics alike. (Aug. 30) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Luddene Perry began her career in organics with a small plot in Colorado almost forty years ago. She is currently a teacher of horticultural food production and garden and landscape design, based in Minneapolis. She founded an organic-certifying company in 1992, and her innovations in the industry led to what are now standard certifying procedures. She is a member of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association and actively consults with the organic-processing industry. Dan Schultz is a freelance writer based in Minneapolis. From the Trade Paperback edition. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 Organics 101 It's easy to overlook the miracle of the modern American supermarket and the complex industry that feeds us. Every week we stroll through brightly lit aisles, surrounded by the least expensive and most abundant food supply in the world, dropping items into a cart without much thought about where it all comes from. 1 Shopping for sustenance is natural to us, and we rarely stop to consider the vast industrial network that allows us this luxury. Americans lack of connection to food production is understandable. In 1900 farmers made up 38 percent of the country's workforce. 2 Today that figure is less than 2 percent, and the closest most of us get to a farm is driving past fields at seventy miles per hour. 3 The fact that only a small number of people produce enough food to supply each man, woman, and child in the United States with more than 3,500 calories per day is testament to the incredible efficiency of industrial agriculture. Americans

never have to worry about finding store shelves empty. We simply buy what we want and eat it. Because our system of food distribution separates us from the soil, we experience food as colorful packages bagged in paper or plastic. Its hard to imagine the people, places, and processes that make it all possible. In some cases our meat supply, for example we exercise a willful ignorance and would just as soon avoid the grisly, gristly details. We prefer to think about happy cows on milk cartons, playful cereal box tigers, and friendly green giants on cans. Even when we do allow ourselves a thought about the variety and quantity of food available to us, our curiosity collapses under the weight of production statistics that we cannot readily comprehend a direct result of the progress made in the last century. Just one hundred years ago when almost half the population was either growing crops, gathering eggs, or milking cows the average life-span in the United States was shorter by twenty-seven years,⁴ and a much greater percentage of people died or became ill from food-related problems. But this progress has exacted considerable costs. The industrialization of agriculture (and of culture in general), while improving our lives in many ways, also separates us from the source of our sustenance the soil. This disconnect poses problems for our health, our environment, and our society. The Organic Response

How does organic food fit into all this? Simply put, the industrialization of agriculture prompted a response: organic farming. But most American consumers have only recently become aware of organic products, as natural food chains, supermarkets, and even Wal-Mart have introduced this segment of the food industry to a wider audience. Shopping for groceries today means confronting new choices among goods that appear to be identical except for their prices and the addition of organic labels. Based on our notions of organic, we make assumptions about these products, but what do we really know? We may understand that an organic product is grown without synthetic fertilizers, chemical pesticides, growth hormones, or antibiotics. Beyond that, we are left with several basic questions: What exactly does it mean when food is labeled organic? How do we know the products we buy are organic? Where does all this organic food come from? Here's the short course. In 1990 Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA). Twelve years later, beginning on October 21, 2002, organic food became eligible for official USDA recognition. The organic labels and products you find in stores today are the result of this law, and the law itself is the result of a long, flavorful history of ideological struggle and political wrangling.⁵ When you buy an organic product, you are paying for an assurance that the product is different perhaps better than its conventional counterpart. The following brief guided tour through the labels will help you understand exactly what this law means to you in the grocery store.

Behind the Seal The first thing to remember is that any product now sold in the United States that claims to be organic must meet the criteria of the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), set forth in the OFPA. Although the USDA seal is not required, any organic product must include the name and address of a certifying agency accredited by the USDA.⁶ In other words, if it says organic, it has to meet the government standards, and it will most likely display this seal: The second thing that the well-informed organic shopper should know is that all organic foods are not created equal. Depending on the percentage of organic ingredients a product contains, it falls into one of four categories only two of which are eligible for official recognition on the Principal Display Panel (PDP), meaning the front of the jar, can, bag, or box. Well use salsa as an example and start with the top of the line. The PDP will look like this: The organic label with a percentage included may seem self-explanatory, but remember: whether its 100 percent organic or just organic, the seal itself will look the same. The difference between the product labeled organic and one that includes a percentage is a matter of a few percentage points of ingredients. With the 100% organic label, every ingredient in the box, can, or jar must be grown organically, except for the salt and water (which are not certifiable). As with all food products sold in the United States, the water must conform to the federal safe drinking water standards. Unlike conventional products, the salt in organic products cannot contain a flowing agent.* In addition, none of the * The additive that keeps salt from getting lumpy and, incidentally, the inspiration for Morton Salts girl with the umbrella When it rains, it pours. ingredients can be irradiated, contain genetically engineered organisms (GEOs), or be grown with sewage sludge fertilizer the so-called big three. A product labeled organic means that at least 95 percent of its ingredients (either by weight or by volume) must be organic. To meet this criterion is to be as close to perfect as is vegetably possible. For example, during the process of making salsa, lets say the supply of organic vinegar becomes dangerously low and therefore unavailable. A letter is placed on file from the vinegar source stating that it cannot supply the salsa maker with organic vinegar, and conventional vinegar enters the salsa.⁷ If the conventional ingredient is not affected by the big three, makes up less than 5 percent of the total ingredients, and is clearly listed in the ingredient panel, the product may be certified organic. The third category of organically labeled foods will be less visible because these products are not allowed to use the word organic as a description of the product. Even though it isn't eligible for a USDA seal or a certifiers logo, the product may include the words made with organic ingredients and list up to three organic ingredients on the PDP. The made with . . . rating requires that at least 70 percent of the ingredients be grown, shipped, and packaged according to organic standards, and the big three rules still apply, even in the remaining 30 percent of nonorganic ingredients. The last type of organic product bears no seal or certifiers logo and contains less than 70 percent organic ingredients. Organic ingredients can be listed on the back panel, but all references to the organic content of the product are prohibited on the PDP in order to assure that these statements are not displayed in such a manner as to misrepresent the actual organic composition of the product.⁸ In this last category, the big three are allowed in the nonorganic ingredients. Because it makes little sense for a

manufacturer to pay for organic ingredients without being able to advertise them, chances are you won't see many of these products unless organic labeling standards change to meet industry demands. In addition to the official seal, you may also confront a number of other labels and certifications. From the Trade Paperback edition.