



10 Reasons to Eat Organic Produce

There are good reasons to go for organic produce when doing your food shopping. The reasons go beyond just you and your family, having an influence on your community, your country, and even the world.

1. Organic Produce Has Natural Flavors

If a plant is well nourished, it will develop with a natural flavoring. Taste-tests have varying results, since some farms add artificial ingredients that seem to taste better, but these are not natural flavors. But, plants that are grown to maximize yield, and ultimately profits, often look good but the taste is disappointing. Commercially grown lettuce for example is comprised of 70% water. Home grown and organic lettuce is comprised of 30% water. The taste therefore is a natural flavor or taste in the less least watered-down variety.

2. Hold the Chemicals on Mine, Please

The growing of vegetables organically does not permit the use of unnatural pesticides and herbicides. There is a standard for true organic which specifies the use of natural fertilizers (animal manure, compost, etc.). The CCOF standard (California Certified Organic Farmers) is the highest in the United States. There is research that non-organic chemicals have a causative relationship with the development of some cancers, birth defects, and nerve damage. There are enough toxins in our environment now that are hard to avoid, so the eating of organic vegetables at a minimum is a smart harm reduction strategy.

3. Protection of Farm Workers Worldwide

In Australia, you must have a qualification that says you have been correctly trained in the use of pesticides and herbicides as they are dangerous chemicals. They kill bugs and insect pests and weeds. They don't do this by singing them lullabies and letting them doze off. Farm workers and their families are at risk. It is estimated over one million people worldwide are poisoned by pesticides annually.

4. Protect the Small Farmer

The modern agricultural world is driven as much by money as any other industry. The huge buying power of the supermarket chains has kept the money earned by farmers to a minimum. The best way to overcome this from a farmer's perspective is by the economies made by scale. Farm sizes have been increasing steadily while the number of owners has been going in the other direction. Most organic farms are still small family owned businesses of less than a hundred acres. Families and people can have a career in sustainable production.

And have you heard of WWOOFers? This is a worldwide movement called Willing Workers on Organic Farms. It is a way to travel the world, to meet people and be part of a community, based on free accommodation and food in exchange for free labor on an organic farm.

5. Provide a True Economy

The costs and expenses of organic farms are clear and transparent. It may mean the produce is more expensive at the market. However, with conventional production, the costs of pesticide and herbicide testing, hazardous waste disposal, the cleanup of environmental damage, the social costs of illnesses caused by pesticides and herbicides are hidden. If they were added directly to the cost of conventionally produced vegetables, the prices would rise dramatically. And don't forget, these chemicals are not just used directly in production. Once harvested, most vegetables are subjected to chlorine washes, or gas treatment to ensure a long shelf life with a minimum of spoilage. Beware!

6. Protect Water Quality

Man can live without food for some time, but without water, the outlook is bleak in a very short space of time. Our bodies consist of about 60% water. Pesticides and herbicides and other agricultural chemicals get into the ground water and eventually the water supply. The Great Barrier Reef in Australia, a once pristine world wonder, now has great tracts polluted by agricultural runoff down the river systems to the sea.



7. Protect the Soil and Prevent Erosion

The soil is the substrate of life. It is not widely known that there are over two times the number of species living in the soil than there are living in the tropical rainforests to which we are so intent on protecting. Soil isn't sexy. Organisms in the soil are vital in the degradation of organic matter and the mineralization of nutrients, in controlling populations of pathogens, in improving and maintaining soil structure and in mixing organic matter through the soil.

Standard agricultural practices decrease the numbers of organisms in the soil and number of species. Soil moisture is decreased and the in soil temperature increased, there is less organic matter in the soil and often only from one or two plants not a range and soil is prone to erosion.

The capacity for humans not to learn from their mistakes is astounding. The dust bowl phenomenon of the 1930's which destroyed over 50 million acres of arable land in Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico and Colorado states of the United States, because natural grazing pasture and soil structure was destroyed by the planting of mono-cultural wheat is testimony to the need to protect our soil. And let us not forget it!

8. Promote Biodiversity

Conventional farming, again for the economies brought about by scale and convenience, tend to use monoculture, huge tracts of one species. The soil is degraded requiring more fertilizers to be applied. A one species crop is more exposed to disease or pestilence, so increasing amounts of herbicides and pesticides are required. Organic farmers practice active crop rotation, grow varied species and promote natural predators to feed on the pests by maintaining areas of undisturbed natural vegetation.

9. Save Energy

Conventional agriculture uses huge amounts of petroleum products. Not just in mechanization, the chemical themselves are often derived from petroleum products. More carbon is in the additives than is used by the machinery on the conventional farm. Organic farmers use more manual methods of weed control, mulching to prevent water loss and green manure crops to put nutrients back into the soil.

10. Protect Future Generations

While Newton was describing the laws of force, "To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" has some resonance as to how we should look at the world. In more basic terms, "What goes around comes around". It is easy enough to say it is someone else's problem or there is plenty for everyone and I am all right Jack. But that is now. What about the future? The Sahara was once arable land. We are beginning the fight against global warming and climate change. We are waging wars for oil. The future is created now.

There are plenty of reasons to go organic and to support the organic industry. It is not a movement run by a bunch of radicals out for profit or personal gain. The work is harder, it takes more thought, it returns less but it is sustainable and leaves a considerably smaller footprint on the planet and its inhabitants.