



**Empowered
Education**

Clearing Up Common Misperceptions About Organic Foods





What does 'Organic' mean when it comes to food?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides specific regulations on what is required for a product to be labeled as "USDA organic", including that:

"Products must be produced using agricultural production practices that foster resource cycling, promote ecological balance, maintain and improve soil and water quality, minimize the use of synthetic materials, and conserve biodiversity."¹

4 levels of USDA organic claims¹

100% Organic

Products that are completely organic or made of only organic ingredients



Organic

Products in which at least **95%** of its ingredients are organic



Made with Organic _____

Products in which at least **70%** of ingredients are certified organic. The USDA organic seal cannot be used but "made with organic ingredients" may appear on its packaging.

Specific Organic Ingredient Listings

Specific organic ingredients may be listed in the ingredient statement of products containing less than **70%** organic content

For example, "Ingredients: water, barley, beans, **organic** tomatoes, salt."



MYTH

Organic foods are better for you

FACTS

- A recent poll found 55% of U.S. adults think organic foods are healthier than similar non-organic versions.²
- Several scientific reviews have determined there is no significant difference in the overall nutrition, level of key nutrients, or nutritional benefits, when comparing organic vs. non-organic versions of the same food.^{3,4}
- The actual nutrition of a product depends more on how long the product has been on shelf and if they're in season because nutrients degrade over time depending on the storage environment.^{5,6}





MYTH

**Organic foods are better
for the environment**

FACTS

- Since organic farming has shown to be significantly less productive, with lower yields (50-80% compared to conventional farming), it requires more land to produce similar amounts of food. ⁵⁻⁸
- Therefore, if a large portion of the population made the switch to organics, it might be difficult to sustain from a land perspective long-term. ⁷



MYTH

Organic foods are pesticide free

FACTS

- Polls have shown that many (as high as 95%) of consumers buying organic foods do so to avoid pesticides.⁹
- However, since pesticides are a useful tool to protect the plants and minimize yield loss and produce high quality products, many organic farmers still utilize them in practice.⁶
- In fact, there are 8,000+ pesticides and/or 100+ fertilizers that have been authorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's organic program, which regulates the USDA organic label.⁵
- Rather than ban pesticides, organic regulations were intended to promote use of natural pesticides over synthetic ones. However, these don't work as well at controlling pests as intended, often leading organic farmers to use other synthetic chemicals that may be less researched or understood.⁵





MYTH

**Organic foods
taste better**

FACTS

- While polls and studies have shown many consumers say they prefer the taste of organic foods compared to non-organic options,^{9,10} there is no evidence indicating organic practices impact the taste of an organic product.
- In fact, recent research has shown consumers are not able to distinguish an organic product from a non-organic product during a blind taste test.^{11,12}
- Regardless of whether it is grown organically or not, the seasonality, freshness, and preparation of a product is much more likely to impact taste.^{5,6}



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