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Organic Food – Is it Worth It?

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Organically Grown! All Natural! The labels fairly scream at us to believe that the product being touted is somehow different and better than the rest. What can we believe? Are the labels truthful? Is it worth it to our health or the environment to pay the often-higher price? Within the past decade, many states have created some form of certification for organically grown food. From the beginning, and increasingly in recent years, most states put real teeth and reliability in their certification process. Generally, if food bears the seal of one of the more widely accepted certifying groups, you can be sure that you are getting what you paid for.

Is it worth it? On the 'yes' side, ANY product that is grown with greater sensitivity to the environment merits consideration. Gourmet cooks revel in the difference in taste from organic food. Beginning studies have indicated that the available nutritional value of organically grown food is higher than chemically grown food. Meanwhile, mounting scientific evidence indicates that our bodies have limits to the levels of residual synthetic herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, steroids or hormones we can process without negatively affecting our health. Our food can contain residues of each and every substance used during growing and processing.

A small number of people have dramatic symp-

oms that signal intolerance for chemicals and synthetics. Rather than question what is wrong with them, let's compare their reactions to the reaction of the miners' canary. Knowing that canaries are more sensitive to the presence of carbon monoxide than humans, miners would take a caged canary into the mine with them. If the canary keeled over, all the miners rushed to safety. No one suggested giving the canary 'allergy' shots. No one demanded that expensive and extensive research be done on the issue. Everyone knew that the canary's reaction was a life-saving warning. And, they heeded the warning.

Chemicals over-use has compromised the health of our soil and quality of our water sources. Where chemicals and synthetics have been over-used, the soil is devoid of earthworms. The earthworm is one of nature's strongest contributors to the health and vitality of the soil. Their very presence is a sign that the soil has vitality. Their absence is a life-saving warning.

With increasing environmental and personal health evidence pointing to the benefits of organic agriculture, and the absence of evidence that organic methods are detrimental, why buy anything but organic? To 'honor' the budget!

Fight now the cost of organic food can be higher than chemically grown food although as public demand pushes supply increase, there is less difference. Whereas organic food used to be found only by mail or in health food stores, major supermarket chains now have

small corners of produce, expanding health food sections and increasing interest in natural or organic meat. If there is little or no organic food available in your area or the local price strains the budget, or traveling to a good source poses any hardship, you must do what feels right for you. Financial distress can be as harmful as any environmental toxin. Engaging in guilt over what you are not able to do is as toxic as the synthetics that kill earthworms. Have an adventurous attitude about stretching your ability to settle only for the best and your apparent resources will expand. You WILL find ways to go organic while honoring the budget. Begin by focusing on buying the few or several items that bring the greatest environmental and personal reward – the best trade-off – for the price.

Iceberg lettuce, for example, is sprayed 10-12 times during a good year and retains high chemical residue. During a bad year iceberg is sprayed 15-20 times. Even if organic lettuce is TWICE the price, buying it is a good beginning. Consider buying leaf lettuce, which is more nutritious than iceberg lettuce and sprayed far less often. For several months each year, leaf lettuce can be grown in very small garden spaces or fairly large pots and containers.

Sprouting seeds in your own kitchen takes very little space or time and the rewards are astounding.

