

Organic Food

Is organic food more nutritious than conventional food? Does organic food taste better? In this lesson, you will learn *5 Facts About Organic Food*. These facts will help you make informed decisions at the grocery store or farmers' market.

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What are the main differences between organic and conventional food?
2. How do you know if a type of food is organic or not?
3. Are you personally concerned about chemicals in your food?
4. What is a "health nut"? Do you think this word has negative or positive connotations?

B. Quote

Discuss the following quote:

"As for butter vs. margarine, I trust cows more than chemists."

—Joan Gussow, food policy expert



Did you wash it first?

It's important to wash fruits and vegetables whether they are organic or not. Even food with inedible rinds (e.g., carrots, mangoes, oranges) should be washed, because contaminants can seep into the produce when you cut into it.

Wash your hands before you wash your produce!

C. Chemicals

Review the following definitions.

Pesticides

A pesticide is a type of chemical that keeps pests such as insects away from a crop.

Fertilizers

A fertilizer is a type of chemical that helps plants or animals grow and reproduce.

Reading

5 TRUTHS ABOUT ORGANIC FOOD

1. *Organic food standards differ by country.*

Each country has its own requirements for organic certification. In countries where organic laws exist, the government oversees certification. Farmers themselves can pay a fee to have their farms certified.

2. *Organic food benefits differ by product.*

Some people say that organic food is healthier than conventional food. Others feel that organic food tastes better. There is little scientific proof that organic food in general has a higher nutritional value, though some studies show that organic milk and organic tomatoes do have more nutrients. Some conventional produce like potatoes, apples, and strawberries contain more chemicals than organic varieties, though organic produce with a thick skin (e.g., avocados, onions, and pineapples) have no known health benefits.

3. *Organic food prices differ from conventional food prices.*

Organic food comes with a higher price tag. This is because it costs farmers much more money to produce organic food. Organic certification and organic farming methods are expensive. As a result, the consumer pays about 20–100% more for organic food at the market or grocery store.

4. *Organic food differs from natural food.*

To avoid paying for certification, some producers use other terms besides “organic” on their labeling. If you see “natural” or “authentic” on a food product, it is not certified organic. The food may still be organic, but the producer is not legally allowed to label it this way because a fee has not been paid to a certification body, such as the USDA Certified Organic program.

5. *Organic food production differs from conventional food production.*

In the US and some other countries, food that is legally *organic* is produced without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. This is better for the earth and air and helps reduce the impact of global warming. Those who feel strongly about animal welfare also choose organic food. Livestock on organic farms are fed, housed, and bred in a humane way. Growth hormones aren’t used, and animals have access to outdoor spaces.

Did you know?

The Environmental Protection Agency has not discovered any serious health risks associated with ingesting small amounts of pesticides found on conventional food. Scientists, however, believe that future studies will link health problems with long-term exposure to pesticides.

Comprehension

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information on the line.

_____ 1. Organic tomatoes have no known health benefits compared to conventional tomatoes.

_____ 2. Consumers pay approximately 20-100% more for conventional food than organic food.

_____ 3. Livestock on organic farms have access to outdoor spaces.

_____ 4. By choosing organic food, consumers can help reduce the impact of global warming.

_____ 5. Other than the cost, *natural food* is the same thing as *organic food*.

Role-Play

ASK THE FARMER

Do you buy produce from a farmers' market or local food stand? Here are some questions you may want to ask about the food you are buying. Practice asking and answering these questions with a partner. One of you will be the farmer and the other will be a health nut who has many questions about the produce.

Questions:

- Are these certified organic?
- Is this all locally grown?
- Are these in season?
- Are these ripe?
- Do you use pesticides?
- How do you manage pests?
- What are the animals fed?
- Has the lettuce been washed?
- Is the corn genetically modified?

Vocabulary Review

A. Odd One Out

Choose the word or phrase that does NOT belong in each group.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. a) pesticide
b) fertilizer
c) vinegar
d) herbicide | 3. a) healthy
b) conventional
c) good for you
d) nutritious | 5. a) kind
b) humane
c) authentic
d) considerate |
| 2. a) eat
b) ingest
c) consume
d) nutrient | 4. a) monitor
b) oversee
c) regulate
d) exposure | 6. a) certified
b) guaranteed
c) authentic
d) costly |

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentence with a word from the word list to the right.
You may need to change the word form or ending.

1. There is no _____ value in candy.
2. _____ use contributes to global warming.
3. The _____ process for organic farms is costly.
4. It is _____ to keep so many chickens in this small space.
5. The USDA _____ food safety in America.
6. Organic fruit and _____ fruit need to be washed thoroughly.
7. _____ is an environmental problem that increases our _____ to UV rays.
8. Wash the lettuce so that you don't _____ any bacteria or pesticides.

Word List

- pesticide
- oversee
- nutritional
- ingest
- certification
- conventional
- global warming
- exposure
- inhumane

Grammar Practice

A. Prefer Vs. Rather

The words *prefer* and *rather* have similar functions. These words help you identify which you like better out of two or more options. Let's review how to use both options correctly.

	Prefer	Rather
Meaning	Prefer is a verb that means "to like better."	Rather is an adverb that means "preferably."
Uses	<p>Prefer can be used with a <i>gerund</i> or <i>infinitive</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I prefer to eat organic food. I prefer paying less money for conventional food. I prefer going to the farmers' market. 	<p>Rather is usually used after the modal <i>would</i>, followed by a verb.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would rather buy organic eggs. I would rather pay less for groceries. Would you rather eat in or go out for dinner?
	<p>Prefer can also be used before a <i>noun</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I prefer organic food to conventional food. I prefer beef to chicken. I prefer organic milk. 	<p>In informal English, you may hear <i>would rather</i> followed by a noun. This means that the speaker has omitted the verb <i>have</i>.</p> <p>Mike: Do you want salad for dinner? Jesse: I would rather a hamburger. (I <i>would rather have</i> a hamburger.)</p>
	<p>Prefer can also be used in a <i>question</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which do you prefer? What would you prefer? Why do you prefer organic tomatoes to conventional tomatoes? 	

Common errors:

Here are some common errors with *prefer* / *rather*. Be careful that you don't use *rather* as a verb.

- I would rather ~~to~~ eat organic food.
- I ~~rather~~ organic food. (*prefer*)

Grammar Practice cont.

B. Practice

Choose which option belongs in the blank, *rather* or *prefer*.

1. I _____ homegrown tomatoes to store-bought tomatoes.
(rather / prefer)
2. Would you _____ use chemicals or not?
(rather / prefer)
3. Which do you _____ , cow's milk or goat's milk?
(rather / prefer)
4. Why do you _____ buying organic food?
(rather / prefer)
5. She would _____ pay five extra dollars for the organic oranges.
(rather / prefer)

Writing

Use what you learned in this lesson and do a little research of your own. Then write your own list. Use the title below, or change it to *5 Reasons NOT to Buy Organic Food*.

5 REASONS TO BUY ORGANIC FOOD

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. _____

_____ | 4. _____

_____ |
| 2. _____

_____ | 5. _____

_____ |
| 3. _____

_____ | |