

## **Should you go Organic or Locally Grown?**

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Following the recent cover story article in TIME magazine, there's been a lot of interest in (and debate over!) organic and locally grown produce. Here's what you need to know to make an informed personal decision.

### What's ORGANIC?

For plant foods to be considered organic they can't have been subjected to any synthetic fertilizers or chemicals (like pesticides); the land they're grown on must be certified organic; and genetic modification and irradiation are off limits.

When it comes to animal foods, organic refers to livestock that has access to the outdoors, has been given only organic feed for at least a year, and hasn't been treated with antibiotics or growth hormones.

### What is LOCALLY GROWN?

Locally grown is a less definitive term, some say it applies only to foods grown within a 100-mile radius, others stretch it to 250-miles, and one pioneer of the movement defines it as food grown within a "day's leisurely drive from your home."

It also usually means seasonal food from small farms, as opposed to the massive agribusinesses where most supermarket food comes from.

### What's the BEST Option?

As a nutritionist, I'd have to say that no matter what type of produce you buy -- locally grown, organic or conventional -- it's VITAL for your health. Tens of thousands of studies have confirmed that the intake of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of chronic illness and improve the quality of life. That said, in the perfect world I'd recommend the following:

Buy as much seasonal, locally grown produce as you can ... you get the chance to connect with your food, help local business, support the environment and get super fresh-delicious produce (securing nutrient density because there's less time spent in transit). However, depending upon where you live, you are limited to seasonal food items. So for greater variety, supplement with store bought organic (consider frozen organic to secure nutrient density and slightly reduce cost).

If money or availability is an issue, I'd limit your supplemental organic purchases to what many experts claim to be the most heavily sprayed 12 items and stick with conventional for the rest.

Suggested 12 foods to buy ORGANIC:

Apples

Cherries

Grapes, imported

Nectarines

Peaches

Pears

Raspberries

Strawberries

Bell peppers

Celery

Potatoes

Spinach

Keep in mind that many local farmers do NOT use pesticides....however, they can't advertise themselves as certified organic because it's a long and expensive process. Therefore, if you'd like to support your local farmers (and organic matters to you) - ask local farmers about their farming methods, you may be pleasantly surprised with the answers.