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Organic Foods:—Are They Safer? More Nutritious?

Once found only in health food stores, organic food is now a regular feature at most supermarkets. And that's created a bit of a dilemma in the produce aisle. On one hand, you have a conventionally grown apple. On the other, you have one that's organic. Both apples are firm, shiny and red. Both provide vitamins and fiber, and both are free of fat, sodium and cholesterol. Which should you choose?

Conventionally grown produce generally costs less, but is organic food safer or more nutritious? Get the facts before you shop.

The word "organic" refers to the way farmers grow and process agricultural products, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, and meat. Organic farming practices are designed to encourage soil and water conservation and reduce pollution. Farmers who grow organic produce and meat don't use conventional methods to fertilize, control weeds or prevent livestock disease. For example, rather than using chemical weed killers, organic farmers may conduct more sophisticated crop rotations and spread mulch or manure to keep weeds at bay.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established an organic certification program that requires all organic foods to meet strict government standards. These standards regulate how such foods are grown, handled and processed. Any product labeled as organic must be USDA certified.

Do 'organic' and 'natural' mean the same thing?

No, "natural" and "organic" are not interchangeable terms. You may see "natural" and other terms

such as "all natural," "free-range" or "hormone-free" on food labels. These descriptions must be truthful, but don't confuse them with the term "organic." Only foods that are grown and processed according to USDA organic standards can be labeled organic.

Organic foods: Are they safer? More nutritious?

The answer isn't yet clear. A recent study examined the past 50 years' worth of scientific articles about the nutrient content of organic and conventional foods. The researchers concluded that organically and conventionally produced foods are comparable in their nutrient content. Research in this area is ongoing. Many factors influence the decision to choose organic food. Some people choose organic food because they prefer the taste. Yet others opt for organic because of concerns such as pesticides, food additives or the environment.

Are there downsides to buying organic?

One common concern with organic food is cost. Organic foods typically cost more than do their conventional counterparts. Higher prices are due, in part, to more expensive farming practices.

Because organic fruits and vegetables aren't treated with waxes or preservatives, they may spoil faster. Also, some organic produce may look less than perfect — odd shapes, varying colors or smaller sizes. However, organic foods must meet the same quality and safety standards as those of conventional foods.

*Written by Mayo Clinic Staff,
 Taken from Mayo Clinic.com*



HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY!



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Sneak-it-to-em Broccoli Soup



Kids love the creamy texture of this light green soup, and it's a great choice if your kids are vegetable haters. Instant mashed potato powder makes it thick (you can substitute leftover mashed potatoes or a baked potato). Other green vegetables, fresh or frozen, may be substituted in equal measure. The soup is especially nice poured over crusty bread. It keeps well overnight and can be frozen.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup water mixed with 1 cup canned chicken broth
- 1 onion, sliced thin
- 1 10-ounce package frozen broccoli, or 2 1/2 cups fresh broccoli, chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 cups low fat or skim milk

- 4 tablespoons instant mashed potato powder
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg

Instructions:

Heat the stock mixture over medium heat, add the onion, broccoli, and salt and cook about ten minutes or until tender. Puree half the vegetables with half of the liquid in a blender or processor until smooth, then repeat with the other half (be sure to vent the steam, since processing hot ingredients can cause small explosions). Heat the milk in a large saucepan until bubbles form on the edges. Stir in the remaining ingredients and carefully simmer for three minutes. Stir in the pureed broccoli and onion, taste for seasoning, and ladle into individual bowls. Serves six.

Taken From: www.familyfun.com

LEPRECHAUN TRAPS

Every St. Patrick's Day since he was in kindergarten, Jacob and his sister, Elise, age 7, have tried to capture a leprechaun. Despite powerful bait (Lucky Charms cereal), their traps have caught only chocolate gold coins and candy bars, accompanied by notes taunting them with "Good try," or "Can't catch me!" As everyone knows, leprechauns hoard pots of gold, and if caught, must reveal the treasure's location to their captor. But that's not the payback Jacob seeks. Because the elusive elves are always leaving him chocolate, he figures they must have even more of that than gold!

It's for the sake of Jacob, Elise, and all the other St. Patrick's Day mischief fighters that Disney FamilyFun offers directions for do-it-yourself state-of-the-art leprechaun traps. Each is easily made from ordinary household materials and uses lures and baits drawn from the latest research in leprechaun psychology.

Here are the directions for one of their clever traps, for other ideas visit familyfun.com.

LEPRECHAUN HAT PIT TRAP

Leprechauns have big egos, so a giant version of their own hat is irresistible to them. Once they step on the false top, you'll have caught a 10-gallon prize. So that the top doesn't give way too soon, use a lightweight bait, such as a crumpled piece of gold foil.

Our hat, a recycled oatmeal container, is wrapped with green felt secured with double-sided tape. To make the trap, we cut a hole in the lid, then cunningly concealed it with a circle of green felt that will give way when the leprechaun steps on it. Leprechauns love to break rules. Warning signs are sure to lure them in. Ours says, "Do not climb ladder!" Natural materials make these woodland creatures feel at home. Our ladder is made from twigs held together with wood glue.

Written by JoEllen Mitchell for Disney FamilyFun

Taken From: www.familyfun.com



BABIES, BABIES, BABIES!

Christa Keene - Torrington

Baby Boy - Ryan Ronald

4 lbs. 14 oz. & 18" long

January 11, 2012



FUN DAYS IN MARCH

March 11th is Johnny Appleseed Day

March 17th is St. Patrick's Day

March 14th is Learn About Butterflies Day, for great ideas go to: www.theteachersguide.com/butterflies.htm

March is National Nutrition Month and Women's History Month!

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