Food and Fitness

Organic Foods—Safer and Healthier??

Crops and livestock with an "organic" label attached must be produced according to federal guidelines made into law in October of 2002. The regulatory body of the government overseeing organic food production is the National Organic Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Does regulation ensure that these products are healthier or safer?

The USDA makes no claims that organic foods are more nutritious or safer than conventionally grown foods. Guidelines demand that organic crops and livestock be produced without the use of synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, growth hormones, antibiotics, sewage sludge, bioengineering, or ionizing

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Web sites of interest:

- www.ams.usda.gov/nop
- www.cdc.gov
- www.usp.org
- www.fda.gov
- www.diabetes.org

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FDA Regulation of Dietary Supplements

At last. You may have some assurance that what you buy in a vitamin or herbal supplement is really there and really uncontaminated. In June 2007 the FDA ruled that supplement manufacturers must test the purity, strength, and composition of all their supplements.

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Using USP to Choose a Multivitamin/Mineral Supplement

While supplements won't fix a poor diet and cannot replace fruits and vegetables, a multivitamin is usually a safe, inexpensive way to supplement essential nutrients. The United States Pharmacopeia (USP) is an independent science-based public health organization that sets standards for quality for supplements and drugs. For 185 years manufacturers in over 130 countries have followed the group's recommendations voluntarily in the production of drugs and supplements. Not to be confused with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this group does not enforce, but rather serves as a verification of quality. USP Verified Dietary Supplement Mark ensures that a supplement:

- Contains what it says on the label.
- Does not contain harmful levels of contaminants.
- Will break down and release ingredients in the body.
- Has been made under good manufacturing processes.

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Organic Foods—Safer and Healthier?? (continued)

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radiation.

There has been some consumer concern over whether produce fertilized with manure may have a greater likelihood of containing E. Coli. Organic regulations dictate that manure must be composted so that the heat will destroy E. Coli. The conventional wisdom is that non-organic crops have just as high a chance of having E. Coli present if there were animals raised near the crops.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends washing all produce under running water before use. Produce with firm skin should be rubbed while rinsing. Even skin which won't be eaten, such as in a cantaloupe, should be washed. A clean knife used to cut into cantaloupe can transfer bacteria from the skin onto the flesh of the fruit if the skin is not washed.

The organic seal indicates that a product is at least 95% organic. Visit the web site www.ams.usda.gov/nop or call 202-720-3252 for more information.

Cinnamon for Cholesterol and Diabetes?

Don't throw away your cholesterol-lowering statins or your glucose-lowering diabetes drugs yet! One of the latest "home remedies" for high cholesterol and diabetes needs more research before you can swallow it hook, line, and sinker as a possible replacement for your medications!

A Pakistani study of 60 people with Type 2 diabetes published in Diabetes Care in 2003 showed lowering of both glucose and LDL cholesterol with cinnamon. However, a German study published in 2006 by Mang and colleagues in the European Journal of Clinical Investigation found glucose lowering, but failed to show improvements in lipid levels or HbA1c in 79 patients with Type 2 diabetes.

Dr. Richard Anderson of the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center and his colleagues, authors of the Pakistani study believe that cinnamon functions by increasing the cell's sensitivity to insulin. They showed that only small amounts of cinnamon would function to lower glucose.

Thinking of trying it? First, discuss it with your doctor. Since large amounts of cinnamon could be toxic and could result in profound lowering of glucose, adding only a small amount of cinnamon to oatmeal or in making cinnamon toast would be recommended.

FDA Regulation of Dietary Supplements (continued)

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Federal inspectors will check manufacturing plants for compliance. All must be in compliance by the year 2010.

Supplement manufacturers may be asked to fix small violations. Large violations could lead to product seizure. However, supplement manufacturers still do not have to prove that supplements are safe and effective before they can be sold, as manufacturers of medicines must. Maybe this won't take 16 more years.

Recipe Corner

Grilling for the Fourth

This year why not grill something different from the usual hamburger. Try a whole fish and fresh vegetables!

Whole salmon or red snapper, head removed

Rinse under cold water and pat dry with paper towel.

Basting sauce:

Juice of 2 whole lemons

4Tbs. olive oil

1/4 tsp. Tabasco sauce

Whisk together. Add:

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

1/4 cup chopped fresh green onions

1 Tbs. chopped fresh basil

2 Tbs. capers

Baste with sauce before placing on grill. Place fish on grilling tray or basket over hot coals or on gas grill. Cook for 20-25 minutes, turning half way. Continue basting, using all sauce.

Slice zucchini and yellow squash lengthwise and make wedges of red, yellow, and green peppers. For a different flavor marinate in fat free Italian dressing. Grill until tender. Serve grilled vegetables on platter arranged around grilled fish.

Almond-Green Bean Salad

4 cups leaf lettuce, chopped

3 cups frozen green beans, thawed and drained

1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved and drained

1/3 cup sliced red onion

2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

1 Tbs. olive oil

Black pepper to taste

2 Tbs. slivered toasted almonds

Rinse lettuce in cold running water, drain in colander, and blot dry with paper towel. Mix all ingredients together and serve immediately or chill up to one hour. Makes 4 servings. Nutrition information per serving: Calories 118, total fat 6 g, saturated fat 0.6 g trans fat 0 g, cholesterol 0 mg, sodium 13 mg, carbohydrate 14 g, dietary fiber 5 g.

Recipe from www.foodandhealth.com

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Using USP to Choose a Multivitamin/Mineral Supplement (continued)

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Thoughts to remember in choosing a supplement include:

- Check with your physician to be sure it is safe for you to take a supplement.
- Choose a multivitamin/mineral supplement with only 100% of the Daily Value. More is not necessarily better, and too much can be toxic. However, "senior vitamins" have extra B12 (24 mcg) to combat decreased absorption of B12 as we age.
- Vitamin/mineral supplements won't give us energy or cure diseases.
- Higher cost is not an indicator of better quality.
- Take multivitamins with meals.

Vitamins can't compete with fruits and vegetables for nutrition.