

SEPT  
2013

# HEALTHY COLUMBUS

BROUGHT TO  
YOU BY:

THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
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DEPARTMENT OF  
HUMAN RESOURCES

healthy **COLUMBUS**  
CITY EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM

FRESH **FOOD**  
PERSPECTIVE



## FALL EATING: THE ORGANIC DEBATE

The popularity of organic foods is skyrocketing. Despite higher costs, many people are choosing organic foods over conventional, especially when it comes to fruits and vegetables. But is organic really better? Enough to make up for the difference in price? It turns out the answer is not so simple.

### What is “organic”?

Organic is a label given by the USDA to describe how a food was grown and processed. Strict requirements must be met for a food to be considered organic. In general, organic farms are forbidden from using the chemical pesticides and fertilizers we see used in conventional farming to protect against pests, weeds and disease. Instead they rely on natural pesticides, crop rotation and other environmentally friendly methods of growing.

### Is organic healthier?

Not necessarily. Despite some studies showing higher levels of certain nutrients in organic vs. conventional foods, this does not hold true across the board. The nutrient content of a plant is primarily determined by factors such as soil composition, geographic location,

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## Sept. Nutrition Programs

### September 13

#### Azoti Sign-up Deadline!!

Last day to sign-up to receive regular deliveries of meat, fruits & veggies. Learn more at

[www.azoti.com/cityofcolumbus](http://www.azoti.com/cityofcolumbus)

### September 26

#### Nutrition Seminar: *Nutrition 101*

12-1pm (On-line Webinar)

From label reading to understanding fats, this class will cover all the nutrition basics you need to know to make informed food choices.

\*To register or get webinar link, contact (614) 645-8049 or [slwade@columbus.gov](mailto:slwade@columbus.gov)

**Prizes, Raffles, Webinars and More!** Get the scoop in News & Announcements!



# SUMMER EATING CONTINUED: THE ORGANIC DEBATE

harvest date and storage time. Thus, it is quite possible that the conventional apple sitting next to the organic apple at the grocery store actually holds more nutrients!

## Is organic safer?

Perhaps. The EPA regulates pesticide use in the US and prohibits the use of known dangerous and cancer-causing chemicals. However they acknowledge the potential for unanticipated health risks or long-term effects, even for those considered safe. Organic produce contains less pesticide residue but what impact this has on our health is unknown. What is known are the positive health benefits we get from eating plant-based foods, regardless of how they are grown. Most of the studies showing benefits from these have actually been done using non-organic foods.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUPS'S LISTING OF THE 12 FOODS HIGHEST IN PESTICIDES AND THE 15 FOODS LOWEST IN PESTICIDES FOR 2013.

## Bottom line

Buying organic is a personal decision and it is up to you if the higher costs outweigh the benefits. While organic farming is better for the environment, there is no strong evidence it is healthier or safer. Most experts agree that it is more important to meet the USDA's recommendation of 1/2 plate fruits and vegetables than to sacrifice quantity in order to afford only organic produce. Options such as purchasing food from local farmers markets or only spending extra money on the organic versions of foods most highly contaminated in pesticides (see "Dirty Dozen, Clean 15" list above) are great ways to reduce your pesticide intake while not breaking the bank.

## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Raffle & Prizes!!** Attendance at 3 or more nutrition seminars will automatically enter you in our year-end raffle to win prizes including one-on-one nutrition counseling and food-related gift cards! For those not able to attend, watching the archived seminars and submitting a short two-answer quiz to [aharris@freshfoodfreshperspective.com](mailto:aharris@freshfoodfreshperspective.com) will count as attendance.
- **Nutrition Seminar Webinars:** Monthly nutrition talks will now be presented by webinar so you can watch right from your desk or home computer. Talks will be conducted live so you will still have the opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback. Registration is still required so we can send you the webinar link- see front page for details.
- **Webinar/Presentation Archives:** Miss one of our earlier talks? Unable to attend this month's? Not a problem. All presentations will be available at the Healthy Columbus website under Wellness Programs.
- **E-mail Forums:** It is not too late to sign up to receive topic-specific monthly e-mails about the latest nutrition research findings, tips and information. Forum choices include: Eating on the Go/Healthy Eating, Diabetes & Nutrition, Cancer &

# ASK THE RD

**Q: I have been hearing a lot about gluten-free diets from my friends and in the media. I was curious why it is healthier and is it a good idea for me to start doing it?**

A: It seems everyone has gone gluten-free these days but unless you have a medical condition requiring you to do so (i.e. Celiac's disease, true gluten allergy), you may be doing yourself more harm than good. People see gluten-free products as being healthier than their gluten-containing counterparts, but in reality most are more processed and higher in calories.

Gluten is a protein found in wheat and a few other grains and has been present in our diet for thousands of years. Proponents of the gluten-free diet argue that it is to blame for many of today's health problems. Evidence for this is based mostly off some studies showing that extremely high amounts of gluten fed to mice can contribute to obesity, inflammation and diabetes.

While more research is needed to understand how and in what quantity gluten affects humans, it stands to reason that extremely high amounts of gluten in the diet may not be healthy. Avoiding gluten entirely may not also be necessary. Today we consume far greater amounts of gluten and wheat products than ever before. Rather than eliminating gluten from our diets it may be beneficial to cut back a bit and try to incorporate other healthy whole grains.

In place of your breads, pastas and wraps, try healthy whole grain options that are naturally gluten free such as oatmeal, brown rice, quinoa, teff and even popcorn! And stay away from those processed "gluten-free" imitations of foods, they will do you no good.



Ashley Harris, MS, RD, LD  
Fresh Food Fresh Perspective  
Registered Dietitian

Ashley has a Masters Degree in Human Nutrition from The Ohio State University, and a strong background in Oncology Nutrition. She is passionate about providing educating on the healing powers of food and on how to make nutritious eating part of everyday life by choosing simple, healthy foods that are both tasty and affordable.

Submit Ask The RD questions to: [aharris@freshfoodfreshperspective.com](mailto:aharris@freshfoodfreshperspective.com).

## TIP CORNER: BETTER FAST-FOOD CHOICES

While most fast-foods are full of fat, sodium and calories, healthier options of whole grains, lean proteins, fresh produce and smaller serving sizes are now available.

Stay healthy and take advantage of these new options by knowing what is available and making sensible menu choices.

### McDonald's

#### • **Healthy Breakfasts**

The new Wholesome Starts Menu offers breakfast items for under 300 calories. Some items, such as the Fruit & Maple Oatmeal or Fruit 'N Yogurt parfait, are available all day long and are packed full of whole grains, fruit, fiber & nutrients.

#### • **Smart smoothies & sides**

Smoothies with real fruit and low-fat yogurt and sides of sliced apples can replace high-fat milkshakes and fries.

#### • **Healthy kids menus**

Kids meals still come with fries but the portion size has shrunk. They also now include apple slices and have ditched the caramel dipping sauce.

### Wendy's

#### • **Super salads**

Salads like the Berry Almond Chicken Salad have 4 servings of fruits & vegetables and come in entree or half-sized versions. But watch the dressing which can add hundreds of extra calories!

#### • **Right Price, Right Size**

Choose from 16 smaller portioned menu items all under 400 calories and designed to fit your budget and diet.

#### • **Healthy kids menus**

Grilled chicken wraps, apple slices and low-fat milk are now available in lieu of nuggets, fries and sodas.

### Subway:

#### • **Salads instead of sandwiches**

Turn any sandwich into a salad to get 5 cups of fresh vegetables including nutrient-packed spinach.

#### • **Sugar-free beverages**

Both water and unsweetened tea are offered as alternatives to high-calorie, high-sugar soda.

#### • **Healthy breakfast options**

Egg white breakfast sandwiches with lean meat options are available with most under 180 calorie. Get more nutrients by adding fresh veggies.

#### • **Healthy kids menus**

Cookies have been replaced with apple slices and meals now include low-fat milk.

# TIMES 4: SIMPLE GRILLED SKEWERS

## FOUR TASTY SKEWER COMBOS FOR YOUR SUMMER GRILL

### 1. Plum and Oregano Chicken

(Adapted from *Real Simple Magazine*.)

#### Ingredients:

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil (and extra for grill)
- 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken (thighs or breast) cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces
- 6 plums, each cut into 4 wedges
- 2 cloves garlic chopped
- sea salt & black pepper
- 2 Tablespoons chopped, fresh oregano leaves



**Instructions:** Heat grill to medium-high. Toss chicken, plums, garlic, oil, 1/2 tsp salt, and 1/4 tsp pepper in bowl. Thread onto skewers. Brush grill grate with oil just before grilling and cook, turning occasionally, until chicken is done (8-10 minutes). Sprinkle with oregano.

### 3. Beef and Vegetable

(Adapted from [www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com))

#### Ingredients:

- 1 lb beef sirloin, cut into 1" pieces
- 1/4 cup + 2 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tablespoon chopped fresh Rosemary leaves
- 3 red or orange bell peppers, cut into 1" pieces
- 2 zucchini or yellow squash, cut into 3/4 inch-rounds
- 1 pint grape or cherry tomatoes
- Coarse salt & ground pepper

**Instructions:** Combine beef, 1/4 cup olive oil, Worcestershire sauce, garlic and rosemary; toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 4+ hours (up to overnight). Before cooking let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes. Heat grill to high. Mix bell peppers, zucchini, tomatoes and 2 Tbs olive oil; toss to coat and season with salt & pepper. Season beef with salt & pepper and alternately thread beef, peppers, zucchini and tomatoes onto skewers. Brush grill gate with oil just before grilling and cook until beef is medium-rare and vegetables are tender (12 minutes).

### 2. Caribbean Shrimp

(Adapted from [www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com))

#### Ingredients:

- 32 medium shrimp (1 pound), peeled and deveined
- 2 large red bell peppers, seeds removed, cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces
- 2 Tablespoons dark rum
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil (and extra for grill)
- 1 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- sea salt

**Instructions:** Heat grill to high. Alternate shrimp and peppers on skewers. Whisk together rum, olive oil, curry, allspice and cayenne. Pour over skewers and turn to coat. Let stand 5 minutes and season with salt. Brush grill grate with oil just before grilling and cook until shrimp has grill marks and appears opaque (2-3 minutes per side).

### MAKING SKEWERS:

- USE METAL OR WOODEN SKEWERS - IF USING WOOD, SOAK IN WATER FOR AT LEAST 30 MINUTES BEFORE PUTTING ON GRILL
- CUT MEAT, FISH, TOFU AND VEGETABLES TO SIMILAR SIZES AND LEAVE A SMALL AMOUNT OF SPACE BETWEEN SKEWER ITEMS TO ALLOW FOR EVEN COOKING
- FOR SLIPPERY FOODS (I.E. SHRIMP, SCALLOPS), ARRANGE ON TWO PARALLEL SKEWERS SO YOU CAN FLIP WITH EASE
- USE TWISTING OR SCREWING MOTION TO INSERT SKEWER INTO TOUGH VEGETABLES OR CUTS OF MEAT

### 4. Marinated Garden Vegetables

(Adapted from [www.food.com](http://www.food.com))

#### Ingredients:

- 2 bell peppers cut into 1" pieces
- 2 small eggplants cut into 1" pieces
- 10 button mushrooms
- 2 medium yellow onions, peeled and cut into 1" pieces
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
- 3 Tablespoon olive oil
- salt & pepper



**Instructions:** Put vegetable pieces in large bowl. Combine remaining ingredients in another bowl and whisk until blended. Pour marinade over veggies and toss to coat. Cover and marinate in refrigerator for several hours to overnight. Heat grill to high and thread on skewers. Brush grill with oil just before grilling and cook until veggies tender (10-15 minutes).



### SEPTEMBER HEALING FOOD: CABBAGE

#### HEALTH BENEFITS:

- Protects against a variety of cancers including breast, prostate, bladder, colon and lung. These benefits are highest when consumed raw or lightly steamed.
- Contains nutrients that protect against heart disease. Cooked cabbage also helps heart health by lowering cholesterol

#### HOW TO USE:

Add shredded cabbage to soup or stir-fry or use raw as the base for a slaw. Use cabbage leaves for sandwiches in place of a wrap or as edible steamer wrappers for fish.