

Surprising Foods to Ease Your Budget Into Organics

Sure, an all-organic diet sounds like a great idea, but the last time I checked I wasn't pulling in a Becks & Posh wage. Attempting to transition into this less than pocket-book friendly way of eating, I have used the "dirty dozen" guide and a growing list of GMO's to help prioritize my family's organic needs. But now, Dr. Alan Greene has taken a more strategic approach to identify the best foods to "go organic." While the pesticide guide is helpful, his list of eleven foods goes beyond produce and standard measurements …

Dr. Greene's new book, "Raising Baby Green" explains how to raise children in an environmentally friendly way, and recommends the following organic foods for the biggest impact on the family diet:

Milk: If you are reading this site, then this one likely isn't a concern for you. But, for any family members who do consume dairy products, it seems organic is the way to go. According to Dr. Greene, "When you choose a glass of conventional milk, you are buying into a whole chemical system of agriculture."

Potatoes: According to the Environmental Working Group (the dirty dozen folks), the potato just makes their list of "most pesticide-contaminated produce." Couple that fact with the high intake of potatoes in the average American diet (they account for 30% of our overall vegetable consumption), and this tuber is a given on the organic shopping list.

Peanut Butter: More than 99 percent of peanut farms use conventional farming practices, including the use of fungicide to treat mold. With peanut butter playing such an important role in children's (and husband's) diets, this does seem like a logical choice.

Baby Food: Dr. Greene states, "If I were going to pick only one time of life to eat organic, it would be from conception through age 3." He points to both the decreased nutrient value of conventional foods for infants and the higher burden that environmental toxins can place on growing little bodies.

Ketchup: Okay, he got me on this one. Ketchup? Yes, it seems that roughly 75% of tomato consumption is in the form of processed tomatoes, from tomato paste to … you guessed it … ketchup. Some interesting research also shows that organic ketchup has double the antioxidants of conventional ketchup. To be honest, I didn't know that antioxidants were even existent in ketchup. Moving on…

Cotton: At first I thought he was going to reference chemicals on the skin from clothing, but the doctor is actually speaking of cotton in our diets, in the form of cottonseeds. While I was aware that cotton production uses a tremendous amount of pesticides, I had no idea that 2/3 of our cotton crops are actually harvested in the form of cottonseeds, which are then used in our food supply for vegetable oil (cottonseed oil), salad dressings, peanut butter, and snack foods.

Apples: Apples rank #2, just after bananas, on the list of most commonly eaten fruit. Luckily, bananas have that nice thick peel to keep pesticides at bay, but apples are not so fortunate. Their thin skin places them in the #2 spot for pesticide load as well.

Beef: Dr. Greene references organic beef heavily for environmental reasons, but he also points out that it tends to be leaner overall, but with five times the omega-3 fats of its conventional counterparts. Organic beef is still illusive, but it can be found. He recommends seeking out grass-fed organic beef or switching to another source of protein.

Soy: The doctor admits that going 100% organic with soy would be quite difficult, as it is so pervasive in our food supply. Soybean oil accounts for roughly 2/3 of all vegetable oils or animal fats consumed in the US. Back to the organic beef, 98% of soy protein from soybean meal is fed to livestock. Yet, consciously making an effort to cut out as much conventional soy as possible may be worth it. Pesticide use for soybean production is extremely high, and 87% of soy planted in the US is genetically modified (GMO). At this point, organic is still a guarantee for non-GMO.

Corn: This one is reserved for those up for a challenge. Like soy, corn is beyond a staple in the US. It starts early in the chain, being fed to our livestock and other farmed animals. It commands the highest pesticide usage, and most of our corn production is genetically modified. But, avoiding conventional corn is as tricky as soy. Ever heard of high fructose corn syrup? This is just one of the food "inventions" utilizing corn. From corn syrup to corn oil to cornmeal, conventional corn works its way into many processed foods.

Wine: This is a "bonus item." Organic wine boasts a good dose more of that "super-nutrient" resveratrol than conventional wine. Plus, the thin skin of grapes can be a magnet for the many pesticides used. Visit Organic Rx for more extensive details on Dr. Greene's Organic Prescription or pick up a copy of "Raising Baby Green."