

Eating Organics on a Budget

To stretch their food dollars, people are changing the way they shop. For some, that means buying fewer organic products or taking them off the shopping list entirely.

Organics on a budget

Maybe you'd like to keep some organic products on your shopping list, but you're not sure which ones to choose. Here's how to get the most bang for your organic buck.

If you're strapped for cash, try prioritizing your produce purchases. Skip the fruits and vegetables that tend to have little or no pesticide residue and focus on the ones that are more likely to contain these chemicals.

Leafy greens and fruits and vegetables with a soft skin, such as strawberries, peaches, and raspberries, are more likely to contain pesticide residues and sometimes higher-risk pesticides. Fruits and vegetables with a thick skin that's not eaten, such as oranges, bananas, and pineapples, tend to have very few residues, if any.

Imported fruits and vegetables tend to have the worst pesticide levels. Whenever you have a choice between buying domestically grown or foreign grown, always choose domestic over foreign.

More ways to save

Many supermarkets now have their own line of organic products, especially canned vegetables. They are usually significantly cheaper than brand name organic products.

Don't forget the memberships clubs. Costco and Sam's Club have a large selection of organics.

Another money-saving option: conventionally grown canned or frozen vegetables. Packaged goods tend to have zero or only slight residues because the processing that takes place before produce is canned or frozen appears to remove some of the pesticides.

Some organic manufacturers, such as Stonyfield Farm, Organic Valley and Horizon Organic Dairy now post coupons on their websites.

Final thoughts

Every family has to live within a budget. So don't beat yourself up if you find that you can't afford to buy as much organic food as you'd like.

Right now, the local farmers market might be a good alternative. The produce is usually fresher and it may have fewer pesticides. Talk to the farmers. Ask them how they grow their crops.

Remember: Eating produce, however it's grown, is better than not eating it. Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet.

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