



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Should I feed my kid organics?”

BY ANNA-KAISA WALKER

Bette Jean Crews
Farmer, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and mom of four, Trenton, ON

Parents should feel good about buying Canadian, whether it's organic or not. Our safety standards for food production are some of the highest in the world. When you buy foods imported from other countries, you don't always know what you're getting – even if they're labelled organic. For traditional farmers in Canada, the government performs spot checks on our fields, and packers will take samples of our produce and send them to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Farmers take courses on how to use crop protection products, which undergo an extremely rigorous testing process, and standards are getting stricter all the time. We're very cautious with what we use, and the chemicals themselves are so

expensive that we don't apply more than necessary. For some crops like strawberries, we'll weed the fields manually instead of spraying, so we're getting closer to organic. If you care about our environment and social and labour standards, it's important to support Canadian farmers.

Ali Chernoff
Registered dietitian, Vancouver

My main concern is that kids get a balanced diet. There is really no difference between organic and non-organic food from a nutrition perspective – white rice is still white rice, whether it's organic or not. Also, I'm not entirely convinced that we can completely eliminate pesticides from our diet by buying organic produce. There still may be pesticide residue in the soil [if it was previously used to grow a non-organic crop], and there can be drift from other farms in the

area. I actually believe that kids can develop food intolerances if you don't expose them to all kinds of things. That's why it's good to feed them a mix of organic and non-organic foods.

Lulu Cohen-Farnell
Founder of Real Food for Real Kids, a catering company for schools, daycares and camps, and mom of two, Toronto

DDT is still legal in some countries – when you buy cherries from Mexico, how do you know what chemicals are in them? If grocery stores listed every pesticide used on apples on a sign next to the price, I think you'd be much less likely to buy them. If your child wants to eat blue cake at a birthday party, it's fine to let it go; it's what he or she eats on a daily basis that matters. It's especially important to buy organic when it comes to the fruits and vegetables that are the most chemically contaminated, including strawberries, apples, potatoes and lettuce. Yes, organics cost more, but look beyond the price and try to see the true value. ☺

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- 2 Nativa Organics Unsweetened Apple Fruit Snack, \$3
- 3 Nativa Organics Honey Graham Bears, \$3



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