

Organic Foods

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Organic foods continue to grow in popularity and availability. Until October 21, 2002, there were no regulations or specific criteria defining what the term “organic” meant. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established new organic certification standards. All products meeting these standards now have a label enabling shoppers to know how their food is grown and processed. It signifies that the food is 95% organic. Organic foods often are more expensive than nonorganic due to the extra costs associated with the system of farming. So what does the term “organic” really mean?

Here are some definitions on organic foods based on the latest standards from the USDA:

- The term “organic” describes a system of farming that prohibits using synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers. This system relies on natural ecological methods to increase production, reduce unwanted pests and improve the soil.
- Organic farmers use methods such as frequent crop rotations and attracting beneficial pests to control unwanted pests.
- For animal products, no growth hormones or routine feeding of antibiotics are allowed.
- Animals must have access to the outdoors and are usually allowed free range.
- Other substances not allowed in organic foods include sewage sludge as fertilizer, genetically modified plants and animals, food irradiation, and many food additives and preservatives.

Check out the following web sites for further information about organic foods:

<http://www.sustainabletable.org/home/>

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/index.htm>

<http://www.eatwellguide.org/index.cfm>

Try these recipes using fruits and vegetables in season during the winter months in Arizona:

Orange-Broccoli Salad (6 servings)

2 lbs. broccoli, trimmed, cooked and drained (about 3-4 cups)

½ cup celery, sliced

½ cup nonfat Italian dressing

2 tsp. grated orange peel

¼ cup orange juice

¼ cup dried dill weed

2 heads of lettuce torn into bite-sized pieces

3 oranges, peeled, sectioned and cut

2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced

Arrange broccoli and celery in large, shallow dish. Combine Italian dressing, orange peel, juice, and dill; pour over vegetables. Cover and chill. To serve, place lettuce on large serving platter or 6 dinner plates and arrange broccoli, oranges and eggs slices over lettuce. Spoon celery and remaining dressing over salad. Serve and enjoy!

Grapefruit Crunch (1 serving)

1 red grapefruit, peeled and sectioned
2 tbsp. yogurt, pina colada flavored, low fat
1 tbsp. low fat granola

Arrange grapefruit sections in a shallow bowl or individual salad plate. Top with yogurt. Sprinkle with granola. Serve and enjoy.