

## Buying Organic on the Cheap

**Comparison shop.** Do a price check among local grocery stores for often purchased organic items and shop where you find the lowest prices. In the New York City area, for example, we found a 4-ounce jar of Earth's Best organic baby food for as little as 69 cents and as much as \$1.29. When it comes to fresh produce, remember that you'll save by buying it in season.

**Go local.** You can find organic growers at most farmer's markets, and a USDA study in 2002 found that about 40 percent of those farmers don't charge a premium. For listings of local farmer's markets and other sources, go to [www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets](http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets) and [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).

**Join the farm team.** Buy a share in a community-supported organic farm and you'll get a weekly supply of produce from spring until fall. The cost to feed a family of four generally ranges from \$300 to \$500 for the season. (Some farms also require you to work a few hours a month distributing or picking produce.) The savings can be substantial. A price study by a community-supported farm in the Northeast showed that the average \$10 weekly cost for a shareholder's produce supply almost always beat farmer's market organic prices and often cost less than the same nonorganic items at a supermarket. Go to [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) for a list of community-supported farms.

**Order by mail.** National providers will ship items such as organic beef ([www.mynaturalbeef.com](http://www.mynaturalbeef.com)). Some local businesses, such as FreshDirect ([www.freshdirect.com](http://www.freshdirect.com)) in the New York City area and Pioneer Organics ([www.pioneerorganics.com](http://www.pioneerorganics.com)) in the Pacific Northwest, offer home deliveries. Other helpful sites:

- [www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org)
- [www.theorganicpages.com](http://www.theorganicpages.com)
- Palmetto Organics: [www.palmettoorganics.com](http://www.palmettoorganics.com)

**Be a supermarket spy.** Make sure you get what you pay for by watching where produce sits on shelves. All grocers are legally required to stack organic fruits and vegetables where they won't be exposed to water runoff from the misting of conventional produce, which could contaminate organic items with pesticide residue. If a store is not following that rule, you may be wasting your money by buying organic produce there.