



Organic Food: What the RD Needs to Know

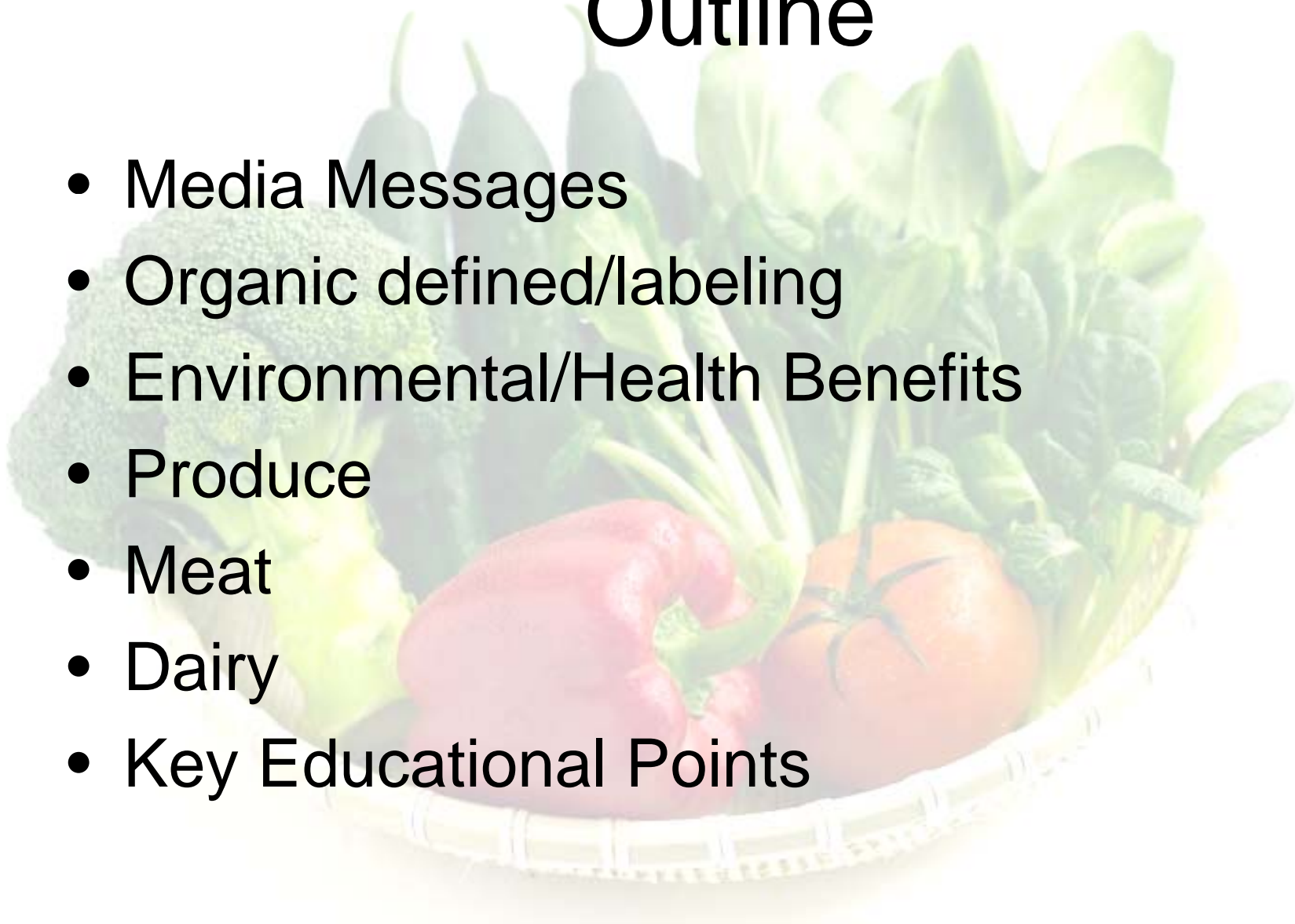
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Outline

- Media Messages
- Organic defined/labeling
- Environmental/Health Benefits
- Produce
- Meat
- Dairy
- Key Educational Points



Media Messages

A basket of fresh vegetables, including a head of broccoli, a red bell pepper, a yellow bell pepper, and a tomato, is shown in the background. The basket is made of light-colored woven material and is filled with the produce.

- “It’s a total con,” said Alex Avery, a plant scientist by training. “There is not a shred of science” to back up claims that organic is safer or more nutritious, he said.

– Organic Food Offers Little More Than Peace of Mind, Critics Say. Fox News. Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,432724,00.html>. Accessed on: November 6, 2008.

Media Messages



- "Any nutritionist will tell you it's a much healthier animal and a much healthier product if the animals are outdoors eating grass," says Ronnie Cummins, national director of the Organic Consumers Association, speaking specifically of organic dairy products.
 - *How Organic Should You Go?* Fort Worth Star Telegram. June 9, 2007. Available at: <http://www.ewg.org/node/21651>
- Percentage of organic buyers down from 25% to 22% this year.
 - Best Organics for the Buck. Newsweek. Available at: <http://blog.newsweek.com/blogs/tipsheet/archive/2008/10/04/best-organics-for-the-buck.aspx>. Accessed on: November 6, 2008.

Food Politics

“You may think you're "stickin' it to the man" by buying Kashi cereals or Odwalla juices -- until you find out that Kellogg's owns the former and Coke bought the latter several years ago. For that matter, General Mills is daddy to Cascadian Farms cereals, and M&M Mars owns Seeds of Change, which makes organic frozen dinners, salsas, pasta sauces and more. The list goes on and on.”

- *How Organic Should You Go?* Fort Worth Star Telegram. June 9, 2007. Available at: <http://www.ewg.org/node/21651>

ADA's Opinion

Research shows that nutritionally there is no evidence that organic produce is better or safer than conventionally grown produce. Organic foods differ from conventional foods only in the way in which they are grown and processed.

But remember, whether they are organically grown or conventionally grown, fruits and vegetables are essential to health and disease prevention. Organic or not, try to include at least five servings every day in your eating plan.

Produced by ADA's Public Relations Team

http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/home_4143_ENU_HTML.htm

Organic Defined

- Crops - Not treated with synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers
 - No irradiation
- Animals - Not given hormones, antibiotics, or drugs to promote more rapid growth
 - No animal by-products fed to other animals
 - Raised in more humane conditions
 - Fed 100% organic feed
 - Access to the outdoors
- No genetically modified organisms
- Inspected and certified



Organic Labeling



- ***100 percent organic***
 - Contains only organically produced ingredients and processing aids (excluding water and salt)
- ***Organic***
 - Consists of at least 95% organically produced ingredients
 - Other 5% are non-organic agricultural products that are not available in organic form
 - May not contain sulfites
 - Does not use ionizing radiation

Organic Labeling (cont.)

- ***Made with Organic Ingredients***
 - Contain at least 70% organic ingredients
 - Does not use ionizing radiation
 - Cannot contain added sulfites
 - Wine may contain added sulfur dioxide
 - USDA seal cannot be used on packaging
- **Products containing less than 70% organic ingredients**
 - Can not use the word “organic” on packaging
 - May list individual organic ingredients on food label

USDA website

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004323&acct=nopgeninfo>

Organic Labeling (cont)

- Must identify each organic ingredient
- Must list name of certifying agency
- The following terms are NOT regulated
 - *No drugs or growth hormones used*
 - *Free range*
 - *Sustainably harvested*
 - *Natural*
 - *Organic Seafood*



Environmental Benefits

- Reduce pesticides in environment
 - Pesticides
 - May reduce soil fertility
 - May cause an overall reduction in plant yield at time of harvest
 - Contaminate ground water
 - Cause health problems for farmers
- Conserve fossil fuel emissions
- Organic farming process prevent soil erosion, enhance soil fertility, and prevent pest and disease cycles
 - Crop rotation, diverse crops

Organic Produce



- Health Benefits

- Less pesticide residues in your body
 - Debate over how bad this is
 - Increased risk for prostate cancer, infertility, reproduction problems
 - Less exposure to farmers
 - Non-organic produce kept 3 times as much pesticide residue after washing than organic
 - Study conducted by Consumer Union
- Better Taste
 - Limited research
 - Specific study showed improved flavor in organic strawberries; improved flavor in apples
 - Often judged as tastier
 - Researchers believe it is because of lower nitrates level
- May have higher levels of antioxidants
 - Results varied
 - Depends on the soil

quality <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/08/080807082954.htm>

Organic Produce

A basket of fresh organic produce, including a head of broccoli, several bell peppers (red and yellow), and various leafy greens like spinach and lettuce, all resting on a light-colored woven basket.

- 12 highest pesticide-containing fruits and veggies – “Dirty Dozen”
 - Peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, lettuce, spinach, potatoes, imported grapes, and pears
 - Imported produce
- 10 least pesticide-containing fruits and veggies
 - Onions, avocados, frozen sweet corn, pineapples, mangoes, frozen sweet peas, asparagus, kiwi, bananas, and cabbage
- Local is the best choice
 - Less nutrient loss

Organic Meat

- “All-Natural” is self-interpreted
 - Manufacturers can pick their practices
 - May suggest more humane practices
- “No hormones added”
 - Never used on chickens or pigs
 - Important claim for beef
 - Hormones are used for rapid growth
 - Hormone use is forbidden in Europe
- “Grass Fed”
 - Healthier alternative to conventional feeding
 - Improves nutritional quality of meat
 - Not subject to inspection
 - Requires access to outdoors, sunlight, exercise, and pasture
 - Does not mean exclusively grass fed or grass finished



Organic Meat (cont.)

- “No antibiotics”
 - Antibiotics used to treat and prevent disease
 - Use of antibiotics in meat may produce resistance in humans
 - “Antimicrobial resistance cannot be predicted—it comes from the mutation of existing bacteria...so we need to keep an eye on this issue and make sure that all the potential entry points into the food chain for such resistant bacteria are controlled.” - April 2008, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
 - Spreads to surrounding areas through water and soil
- Raising organic livestock is more difficult than produce
 - Paper work
 - Many hold to standards but don't get certification

Organic Dairy



- Animals fed organic feed and treated more humanely
- No use of hormones
 - May produce high insulin levels and IGF-1 (growth factor)
 - IGF-1 could stimulate growth of cells in the colon, breast and prostate
- A few international studies showed higher levels of conjugated linoleic acid and omega-3 fatty acids in organic cows milk
- May prevent development of eczema in babies
 - Unknown why

Are synthetic hormones in milk really bad for you? Available at:
<http://jscms.jrn.columbia.edu/cns/2006-04-04/lyon-hormonesandmilk>. Accessed on:
November 6, 2008.

Take Home Message

- Organic is a personal choice
 - Be sensitive to client's preference
- Educate on the best use of a person's organic dollar
- Intake of any fruit or vegetable is better than none
- Buy organic for the produce that is in the “dirty dozen”
- Buy local and in season when you can
 - www.localharvest.com
 - www.palmettoorganics.com
 - Farmers' market
- Avoid non-organic imported produce

George Hall Farm Simsbury, CT

<http://cf.ctnow.com/news/soundslides/hall's%20farm/index.html>



“At 81, Organic Farmer in Simsbury Still Growing” *Chicago Tribune*. Available at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/hc-atworkfarm1013.artoct13,0,6856142.story>. Accessed on October 24, 2008.

Resources

- Consumer's Union:
<http://www.consumersunion.org/pub/f/foodorganic/index.html>
- Environmental Working Group:
www.ewg.org
- <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/food/diet-nutrition/organic-products/organic-products-206/chemical-health-risks/index.htm>

References

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- Bareuther C. Mission Organic 2010; *Today's Dietitian*. Vol 10. No 4. pgs 30-34.
- Nestle M. What to Eat. North Point Press. 2006.