




Organic Vs. Pesticide Free

Organic:

Foods that carry the green “USDA Organic” seal  have been grown and processed according to strict criteria, as verified by private or state organizations. The use of most conventional pesticides, petroleum-based fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, irradiation, and sewage sludge is prohibited. Natural pesticides may be used such as using beneficial insects and birds, mating disruptions or traps to reduce pests and disease. Animals are raised on 100% organic feed and are not given antibiotics or growth hormones, and they must have access to the outdoors. If they get sick and need antibiotics they are removed from the other animals and are not sold as organic.

Pesticide Free:

The term “pesticide free” has no precise meaning, and foods with that label may be any of several types. Some may have been grown without pesticides, similar to organically grown foods, but not grown organically in other ways. Some might have been tested before they reach the market and certified to contain no detectable pesticide residues. Foods with a “no pesticides” claim often have more residues than organic foods, but contain less than conventionally grown food.

Natural:

The USDA defines “natural” only for meat and poultry. It refers only to what happens to the meat after slaughter, not to how the animal was raised. It does not guarantee that antibiotics or hormones were not used, or that other organic standards were followed. Natural meat or poultry products contain “no artificial ingredients and are no more than minimally processed”.

Locally Grown:

Many small farmers cannot afford the USDA certification program to be labeled organic, or they opt out because of the tremendous paperwork involved or for other reasons. However, these farmers may follow the standards necessary or even stricter ones. The only way to find out is to ask them about their farming methods. Usually local produce (organic or not) tends to be fresher and more flavorful than produce that has been shipped long distances. Plus, buying locally supports small farmers.