

# Organic

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This newsletter is published by the Organic Trade Association, the North American trade association committed to the promotion of organic products in the marketplace, and the protection of the integrity of organic standards. Its membership includes more than 1,250 producers, processors, distributors and retailers of organic foods, fibers, farm and garden supplies, and health and beauty products. OTA is your leading resource for information about this industry.

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INFORMATION FLIER – A PUBLICATION OF THE ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

## Choosing organic From making pizza, to every day cooking, to meals in schools

Emphasizing Organic for Kids in its September celebration of Organic Harvest Month™, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) has put together resources that families will find useful in making choices for food served both at and away from home. These messages are posted on OTA's consumer web site, *The O'Mama Report* ([www.theorganicreport.org](http://www.theorganicreport.org)), and will be discussed in a Sept. 23 teleconference for the media.

### The Ecology of Pizza

An essay entitled "The Ecology of Pizza (or Why Organic Food is a Bargain)," prepared for OTA by ecologist Sandra Steingraber, compares the social and environmental costs of eating pizza made with organic versus conventionally produced ingredients.

Making two pizzas from scratch, Steingraber used conventionally grown ingredients for one and organically grown ones for the second. She then estimated the cost of the ingredients she used.

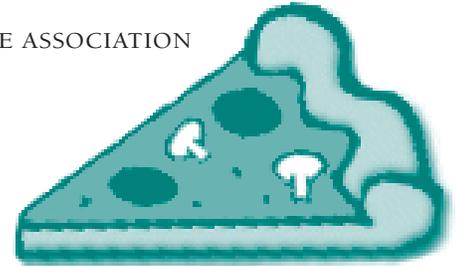
The results: a total cost of \$4.50 for the conventionally grown ingredients, versus \$6.85 for the

organic grown ingredients [Steingraber actually paid \$5.65 for the organic ingredients because of the discount she

receives as a member of the food cooperative where she shops].

**This cost comparison tells only part of the story, however.**

"The principal reason that organic food costs more than conventional food is that organic food costs more to produce. By and large, organic farming relies more on labor and less on chemicals, and, in the United States, the former costs more than the latter," Steingraber writes, adding, "Except that pesticides are not as cheap as they appear. And here lies the reason why organic food is actually a bargain. The price of organic food reflects, more or less, the full costs of making it. The price of chemically grown food does not. Among the costs not incorporated into the bar codes that keep their way through the check-out lane:



fertilizer-contaminated groundwater, insecticide-contaminated fish, herbicide-contaminated rain, dead honeybees, poisoned wildlife, deformed frogs, eroded soil, toxic algal blooms, ozone depletion, and antibiotic resistance. These are what economists call 'externalities'—the costs of an activity that are borne by others. The bad thing about externalities is that they lead to market outcomes that are costly to society even though privately profitable."

In fact, she says Cornell University professor David Pimental has estimated that the externalities of conventionally grown food cost more than \$10 billion a year. This includes "costs of lost work caused by poisonings of farm workers, medical treatments for pesticide-induced cancers, and the maintenance of complex regulatory systems to monitor pesticides residues in everything from applesauce to lake sediments."

The total price tag is likely to be even higher: these calculations do not account for such hard-to-quantify costs as pesticides' ability to affect pregnancy.

*Continued on page 2*





### Chefs on board

Meanwhile, OTA has created an Organic Family Menu Guide filled with anecdotes from leading chefs and their tips for incorporating organic products in meals.

Nora Pouillon, chef and owner of Restaurant Nora and Asia Nora in Washington, D.C., introduces the Organic Family Menu Guide, “designed to inspire families who want to incorporate organic foods into their everyday lives. It presents a rich variety of options for every meal, from breakfast to dinner.”

Her menu offerings include Granola French Toast, Egg in a Nest, Accordion Tomatoes, and Roasted Chicken with Seasonal Vegetables.

Chef Akasha (Richmond) of Los Angeles, who often caters parties and events for celebrities, shares her recipes for Almond-Apricot Scones with Vanilla Bean Glaze, Chocolate-Cherry Banana Muffins, Savory Corn Bake with Roasted Poblano Chile & Green Onions, Butternut Squash & Parsnip Bisque with Spiced Pumpkin Seeds, Green Bean & Wild Mushroom Casserole, and Grilled Eggplant Parmesan.

Jesse Cool, owner and chef of Flea St. Café, jZcool Eatery and Catering Company, and The Cool Café at the Stanford University Cantor Arts Center, points out, “Organic menus and recipes don’t exist. Organic ingredients do.” She shares her recipes for Olive Toast with Berries, Chilies and Honey; Harvest Pot Roast; and Potatoes in Caraway Sauce.

Also featured are recipes from Michel Nischan, executive food consultant and chef for Song (a subsidiary of Delta Airlines) and author of *Taste Pure and Simple: Irresistible Recipes for Good Food and Good Health* (Chronicle Books, 2003). His recipes include Squash Pancakes with Fig Syrup, Pistachio-Roasted Baby Chicken, Beef Tenderloin with Wild Mushrooms and Yukon Gold Potatoes, Rich Beef Stock, Rich Mushroom Stock, and Buttermilk Sour Cream.

Odessa Piper, chef and proprietor of L’Etoile Restaurant in Madison, WI, shares her recipes for L’Etoile’s Gougere, Grilled Asparagus with “Dunk,” and Seared Snug Haven Spinach and Mint, while Scott Uehlein, executive chef at Canyon Ranch, outlines his recipes for Granola, Stuffed Yellow Bell Peppers, and Caramelized Vegetables and Tofu Stir-fry.

### Eating at school

Thirdly, at OTA’s request, writer Elaine Marie Lipson has prepared a helpful overview for parents who want to effect change in the foods their children eat at schools.

Lipson found that some schools, particularly colleges and private schools, have begun focusing on buying from local and regional producers, “and in doing so discover that many of the food producers interested in these programs are committed to organic practices.” Pioneering programs highlighted include Stanford, Princeton, Colorado College, Bates, the University of Wisconsin, and Maharishi University of Management in Iowa.

One operation spotlighted by Lipson is OTA member Wild Sage Foods, Inc., which operates a restaurant on the campus of Colorado College through a licensing contract with Sodexo.



Organic salads are among the offerings at Colorado College.

Photo: Steve Starr

Lipson also interviewed Nadeem Diddiqui, executive director of dining services at Stanford University, who is using Stanford’s national reputation to set an example for supporting organic and locally grown foods.

Lipson’s articles also explore strategies that are showing some success. These include the farm-to-school movement, tasting fairs, and community advisory councils or committees. Among the examples cited are efforts by Sonya Kugler of OTA member company Natural Needs Marketing to help get organic foods in elementary and junior high schools in the Highland Park, IL, area. These have included initiatives to help children make the connection between farms and food.

### September teleconference

In addition to these postings on [www.theorganicreport.org](http://www.theorganicreport.org), OTA has scheduled an hour-long media teleconference Sept. 23 featuring a roundtable discussion on “The True Costs of Our Family’s Food: A Look at Conventional vs. Organic Agriculture.”

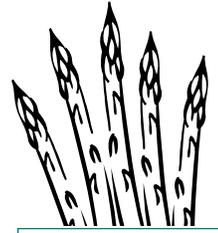
Among the participants will be Sandra Steingraber (who will discuss her Ecology of Pizza findings), Robert Kennedy Jr., of Waterkeeper Alliance (who will discuss environmental issues), and Katherine DiMatteo (giving an organic industry perspective). There will be time provided for questions from the media.



### SIGN UP FOR TELECONFERENCE

Members of the press are invited to take part in the September 23 teleconference hosted by OTA on “The True Costs of Our Family’s Food.” To register, call 781-648-7157 or e-mail [sue@mcgov.com](mailto:sue@mcgov.com).

# A World of News



## Organic news

- Acreage devoted to organic research through the U.S. land grant system more than doubled between 2001 and 2003 but still lags behind the proportion of U.S. farmland that is certified organic, according to the Organic Farming Research Foundation report, *State of the States Second Edition: Organic Activities in U.S. Land Grant Institutions 2001-2003*.
- A 71-year-old organic farmer from Big Sandy, MT, was one of two persons nationwide to receive the 2003 Excellence in Conservation Award from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A study by Montana State University research Dave Bucshena showed that from 1992 to 2000, organic farmer Robert Boettcher achieved returns that were slightly more than \$15 an acre better than those of conventional farmers in the area.
- Price Chopper Supermarkets is rolling out a private label organic line, with about 20 products slated to be available by the end of 2003, including soymilk, tortilla chips, and frozen veggie burgers.
- Marharishi Vedic City in Iowa announced a \$9.5 million greenhouse project to produce organic food. The project, when completed, is anticipated to create 215 jobs and produce enough products to fill two refrigerated semi-trailer loads a day.
- Ben & Jerry's Homemade Inc. announced plans to test-market a line of organic ice cream in San Francisco and Boston.
- The 7-Eleven store chain announced it would add several varieties of natural, low-fat and organic chips from manufacturers such as The Hain Celestial Group and Snyders to appeal to health-conscious consumers.
- Dunkin' Donuts announced it would begin selling as a national brand espresso beverages made exclusively with Fair Trade Certified™ coffee certified through TransFair USA
- "The natural and organic pork market: A sustainable niche for small-scale producers? A review and analysis of the evidence" by W. Parker Wheatley in Vol. 18, No. 1, 2003, *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*, shows small-scale producers may find natural and organic production as viable alternatives to capital-intensive production.
- Comparing the economics of organic and conventional grain crops in a long-term research study, Kathleen Delate and colleagues at Iowa State University found organic rotations are competitive with conventional corn-soybean rotations. See Vol. 18, No. 2, 2003, *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*.

## Environmental news

- Tests conducted by the Denmark and Greenland Geological Research Institute found the herbicide glyphosate is polluting underground water supplies in Denmark. Results, reported in an article by Anders Legarth Schmidt posted on [www.newfarm.org](http://www.newfarm.org), showed glyphosate levels five times higher than allowed in drinking water.
- The manager of the Swan River in Perth, Australia, reported that thousands of fish were slowly dying because of the overuse of fertilizers.
- Exposure to environmental contaminants, including pesticides, beginning in the first year of life are linked to early asthma, according to an epidemiological study presented at the American Thoracic Society meeting in May. Researchers led by Frank D. Gilliland, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California, found that herbicide exposure before one year of age increased the risk of asthma by more than four and a half times, while exposure to other types of pesticides increased the risk by nearly two and a half times.
- Following an earlier study showing that men in rural mid-Missouri had lower sperm counts and quality than their peers in urban Minneapolis, a University of Missouri-Columbia researcher has linked the problem to three agricultural chemicals—alachlor, atrazine and diazinon [June 17, 2003, online edition of *Environmental Health Perspectives*].
- Significant increases in birth malformations have been noted in four U.S. wheat-producing states where chlorophenoxy herbicides are widely used, according to a research article by Dina M. Schreinemachers in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 111, No. 9, July 2003.
- The report, "Dioxins and Dioxin-like Compounds in the Food Supply: Strategies to Decrease Exposure," released by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies notes that reducing exposure at an early age is critical because dioxins accumulate in the body over time.

### Quote of Note

"Every organic meal you eat means less pesticides are produced and sprayed, ensuring cleaner soil and water for future generations."

Adam Ruderman  
of  
Herban Kitchen

*Continued on page 4*



### Choosing Organic

Sandra Steingraber, at age 10,  
selling organic tomatoes  
(story, Page 1)

## A World of News *Continued from page 3*

### Consumer trends

➤ Seventy percent of consumer households surveyed for the Food Marketing Institute's "Trends in the United States: Consumer Attitudes & the Supermarket 2003" report indicated their primary grocery store sells natural or organic foods; of the remaining, 18 percent said their store didn't, while 12 percent were not sure. Nearly half (48 percent) said they prefer that organic products be displayed in their own section rather than integrated in the store. However, an increasing number (37 percent, up from 26 percent the previous year) said they prefer that organic products be stocked with their conventionally produced counterparts. In addition, 160 of 1,001 respondents said they purchase organic products at least once a week, and an additional 190 said they make such purchases one to three times a month. Forty-five percent of those polled said they are aware of the new

organic labels, while 55 percent said there is a difference between "USDA" and "Made with" organic labels. Fifty-six percent indicated that "certified organic" labels were very or somewhat important to them.

➤ A nationwide survey released in late May showed that approximately three-quarters of Americans are concerned about the presence of antibiotics in meat production when they shop for beef and poultry. However, less than one-half are aware that the beef and poultry purchased at American supermarkets

commonly are raised on feed containing antibiotics. The survey, conducted by Synovate, was commissioned by Whole Foods Market.

➤ A survey of 1,028 Americans conducted in March 2003 by The Natural Marketing Institute found 69 percent of those polled saying that "personal health and wellness is more important than it used to be," up from 60 percent in October 2002.

