

## **Organics Foods**

Now you can now find so many of the things you used to have to hunt for — such as organic produce, organic milk and other certified organic products. It makes sense to offer a choice.

### **From the Farm to Your Table**

When you hear "organic" you probably think, "expensive." It should not be that way. When you shop the produce department, look for fresh-from-the-farm produce with the USDA organics seal. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the various USDA labels.

Here are some frequently asked questions about organic food. Hopefully you will find it helpful. The answers contain information provided by the United States Department of Agriculture.

### **What is Organic?**

Organic foods sold in stores are products that carry the USDA labels which have been certified as such and meet the USDA standards. Produce that earns the USDA organic certification is grown without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, bio-engineering or ionizing radiation. In order to be labeled "organic," the farm where the food is grown is certified to make certain the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it arrives in stores must be certified, too.

### **What Do the Various Organic Food Labels Mean?**

Single-ingredient foods, such as vegetables and pieces of fruit, carry the USDA Organic label either as a sticker or on the sign above the bin. Meat, cartons of milk or eggs, cheese earn the organics label if they are grown or produced on organic-certified farms. The USDA Organics label means that these foods are at least 95% organic.

For foods with more than one ingredient, the labels differ:

- Foods with 100% organic ingredients are labeled "100% Organic"
- Foods that contain 95-100% organic ingredients are labeled "Organic"
- Processed foods that contain at least 70% organic ingredients can use the phrase "Made with organic ingredients" and list up to three of the organic ingredients on the display panel
- Processed foods with less than 70% organic ingredients cannot use the term organic anywhere on the main display panel, but may identify the specific ingredients that are organically produced in the ingredients statement
- Look for the name and address of the government-approved certifier on all packaged products that contain at least 70% ingredients

### **What's the Difference Between Natural and Organic?**

Only food labeled "organic" has been certified as meeting USDA organic standards. The term "natural" means that a food product is basically free of artificial and synthetic ingredients and for meat and poultry, the products are also minimally processed. Truthful claims, such as "free-range," "hormone-free" and "natural" can still appear on food labels. But they don't mean that the food is organic.