



# Food Actually

finding  
real food in the  
real world

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## So What is Healthy Sustainable food? What to eat?

### **Think : What did my great grandmother eat?**

Okay, it's more than that. After all, we're living in the modern world. But it's really good ground to start on- literally, as you'll see. Basically, healthy eating is about whole foods, plants grown in clean, vital, live soil. If you include animals/animal products in your diet, then it's about being raised as nature intended. In all your food choices, if grown locally, then all the better!

That doesn't sound *too* hard right? Well, that's true, and, there are a lot of nuances within actually eating this way in this day and age. Its not hard to do- however, educating oneself about the true realities in our food systems is absolutely key to achieving it. Not only that, it is essential to sustaining our planet, which of course sustains us.

Sustainable foods are healthier than industrial food because of higher levels of "good" fats and nutrients in grass-fed animal products and higher nutrient and lower pesticide residues in organic foods. Meanwhile, industrially-produced food is detrimental to our health because it leads to outbreaks of food-borne illness, contributes to antibiotic resistance, pollutes drinking water and more...

Whole foods are foods that are in their original form, or very close to it- Think potatoes instead of potato chips; apples, peaches, berries, instead of fruit roll ups or canned fruit; whole grain bread, instead of white loaves; juice from a lemon, not from a plastic lemon with a cap; brown rice or quinoa instead of white.... Processed foods lack the elements of good nutrition, and are really only "imitation" food, containing questionable ingredients that may harm health over time or even in the short term. If you stick mainly to the outer edges of your supermarket instead of the aisles, you'll get a good idea. Shelf life? If it sprouts or rots, you're lookin' good!

## Considering Cost & Convenience

I'd like to just touch on this right at the start, because I understand that these things are big factors that influence and impact our everyday lives in this modern world. It's helpful to really understand a broader picture to get at what the realities are, as they might add to or detract from our pockets and lives. There's a bit more to consider beyond just what numbers and decimals appear on that price tag in front of you.

**Cost** - is not simply calculated in dollars. Honestly, food shouldn't be "cheap". It is the very thing that gives us life, healthy and vibrant or otherwise. Can't say that about premium cable channels, can ya?

Better perhaps to look at what it is that you actually receive (and take). It's also calculated, in time, environmental effects, nutrition, health, quality of life, experiences, relationships and so on... You can go to "Walmart" only, for ease. But at what cost? What's received? What's lost?

Now I'm not advocating against Walmart. Here, we're not bashing anybody. I'm here to offer things to consider so that you can make your own choices. Plus, I understand that many people consider Walmart a viable option. To their credit, Walmart is making efforts to implement some healthier options to meet rising customer demand. My aim is to showcase other ways and let you see what entices you and what you might be able to incorporate. Know that there are ways to economize, even outside of Walmart.

### Convenience

A trip elsewhere (in addition to Wallyworld) may be an extra thing, but when you consider it may provide a fun, wholesome and even educational family activity/outing, then suddenly it has added value. Or consider a new way of thinking, like a farm delivery right to your door, which can provide a time saving approach, while supporting your local economy, and strengthening food security...

See where I'm going with this? Think **Value**. Progress, not perfection. Open mind....

## So this “Healthy Sustainable Food”- What to look for? ~ 5 Key components

### Organic and “Beyond Organic”

With organic food, you know you are getting food that has no added hormones, no antibiotics, no chemical pesticides or fertilizers, no genetically engineered ingredients, and no irradiation.

Choosing organic foods means that we won't be putting all those “nasties” into our bodies or those of our children (even rougher on their developing immune systems!). Their profoundly negative impacts have very far reaching effects on our environment, the soils that grow our food, and all other creatures too...all of which play a part in food sustainability and whether or not we will be able to feed ourselves well into the future.

While I always recommend Organic whenever possible, understand that USDA Certified Organic is not always the absolute best. Keep in mind that there are small family farms that are not USDA certified organic, but practice far healthier methods and have far less impact on our planet than large industrial corporate government certified organic industrialized farms. The certification is very expensive, so many small operation farmers opt to instead put their funds into the quality of the food and care of their land, while cultivating relationships with the people they feed. So get to know your local farmers. Pick those with the best overall practices. They are most times your best bets!

### Local

While organic or “beyond organic” is really important, we need to remember that food eaten closest to the time it is picked has a higher concentration of vitamins, enzymes and nutrients. Organic food can be grown thousands of miles away, and take a lot of time to be shipped all the way to you, while wasting fossil fuels and contributing to pollution- simply not sustainable.

Buying Local and Organic also contributes to our local economy. Increased demand for organic foods has attracted large agribusiness corporations that intend to profit from the trend. Instead, we can offer our dollars to our local farmers, helping to ensure a sustainable food system close to home. Farms in the hands of multitudes of small farmers creates a diversity that is far less vulnerable to disease and crop failure than that of just a few giant corporations practicing mass industrialized food production.

“So what about bananas, pineapples, oranges... the things that don't grow in my climate?” We do live in a global economy. I'm not saying we give up everything that doesn't grow nearby. However, for example, why buy a tomato from California, when you can get one from your local area? Choose with awareness. Whatever you can obtain from your local area, choose that.

## **In-Season**

Alright, so maybe you just *have* to have a tomato in February. Understandable, believe me. But you might think about this- do they grow in your area in February? If not, they may have been grown very far away, picked before ripe and then ripened with methane gas, so they wind up “looking” good on the supermarket display. If you’re luckier, you’ll have an organic farmer nearby that grows them in heated greenhouses. At least they’re fresh and local that way, but they do use a lot of energy to heat those greenhouses. Hmmm.

Buying or growing extra when in-season, then freezing, (or dehydrating or canning) can provide you with quality food out of season that is much easier on the environment, and your wallet. Or, you can just wait for when their time comes again, anticipate them, then relish, savor, and drool over them when they are bursting with taste and nutrition, at their peak and in their prime! Absence makes the heart (and tastebuds) grow fonder, and appreciation and awareness grow deeper.

I’m not saying “You can’t have that!” Sometimes ya just gotta. (You’ll find lemons in my fridge all year round in New York). But perhaps you might consider whether you *really* want it, *every* time, or whether your creativity can take you somewhere else more in tune with Nature’s cycles.

## **Fresh**

As soon as food is harvested, it begins to lose the nutrients and taste, as it begins to degrade. So, would you rather have something that you pick from steps away from your back door, that within 15 minutes to an hour is on your table, in your bellies, nourishing your bodies and minds?

Okay, so maybe you don’t have a garden, so you choose the farmers market instead. These foods probably got picked that same morning, or the day before, brought to you from local fields. Pretty great.

Or you can acquire everything from Walmart, where food may have been picked a week or two ago, having been trucked in from 1500- 3000 miles away, packed in trucks or ocean liners guzzling a bunch of fossil fuel, polluting our air and water...

Hmmmm.

Another thing to understand. Food that is trucked in is usually picked while not ripe, so it can withstand the rigors of so much handling, travel and time. Nutritionally speaking, it is within the last 3-5 days of the fruits development on the tree or vine that all the nutrition is concentrated and at its peak, so you can see that freshness makes a difference from this angle too. Vine or tree ripened delivers the most to your body.

**Humanely and Pasture Raised (grass fed)-** to put it in the words of one of my heroes, Joel Salatin, a 3rd generation pasture-based , beyond organic farmer and activist *“Plants and animals should be provided a habitat that allows them to express their physiological distinctiveness. Respecting and honoring the pigness of the pig is a foundation for societal health.”*

## Humanely and Pasture Raised (grass fed) Continued...

For those who eat meat or animal products, it's essential to understand, that the animals we eat have evolved mainly as herbivores, meaning they eat a variety of grasses and greens to maintain health. Others eat nuts, seeds, some grains, grubs, insects, worms... They were not meant to eat genetically modified corn, other farm animals or parts of their own species, which is what the factory farm system feeds them. Antibiotics and hormones are aggressively and constantly used in animals within the industrial food system just to enable them to survive the most heinous conditions and produce more than they naturally do. You and your kids don't need to be ingesting these things- coming into puberty unnaturally sooner, developing antibiotic resistance...and who knows what else from these drugs. We need our antibiotics for when we really have something to deal with, not to keep our farm animals standing long enough to slaughter them at record time and weight.

The sun, fresh air and room to move around are also key to maintaining health. Animals aid soil fertility through their excrement, if grazing the land rotationally, so they can play an important role in the health of our soils.

These animals have certain needs in order to be healthy. It is foolish to treat them as mere commodities or economic units by factory farming them. They are sentient beings who provide for us. Without even bringing morality or animal suffering into this, the fact is that a healthy, happy animal, from birth to slaughter, means safe, nutritious meat, cheese, eggs....

A "happy meal" - You'll never find *that* under the golden arches.

**Understand this** ~ the hamburger, steak, chop, breast, egg, bacon, milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream... was created from their flesh and their tissues - which in turn are made up of the food, drugs and pesticides in their systems, even the stress levels in their bodies-

ALL of that enters *your* system when you eat them.

**So, being clear about what the labels and terms mean becomes important in order to make the healthiest choices.**

**Later, you'll find that section.**

## Can I get all this at the supermarket? Where can I find it or get it? And what about our budget?

For the most benefits to our health, economy, environment and sustainability, whenever you can, choose organic farmers, farmers markets, health food coops or grocery stores that specialize in local organic foods in your area.

These days, many supermarkets have at least a small selection of organic, and local foods. Sadly, they often aren't the best quality. There's nothing sadder than an organic cucumber strapped to a styrofoam plank with a swath of saran wrap! - and even worse- from 1500-3000 miles away.

### **If You're On A Budget ~ or just want the best food at the best prices ~**

Yes, for now, organic or sustainably grown usually costs more than conventional, although not always (and don't forget about *true* cost). Still, there are numerous ways to make it affordable, and rewarding.

**Coops & Natural Markets** - These are food stores where you'll find the largest selection of organic, sustainable and healthy foods in one place. They'll also serve you with products like grains, yogurt...and healthier versions of pretty much all the foods you buy at the supermarket. It comes in handy for a one stop kinda place, but you will pay more here, as its a middleman, but you'll get quality that far surpasses "Walmart." There's a bit of a learning curve, but you can start with the things you absolutely can't get at "Walmart" but really want to replace- for example- healthy, clean meats & dairy.

### **Farmers market – find one and make friends with it.**

**You can also start with simply making a family outing field trip to see what it's like**

You get food straight from the farmer. There's no middlemen to take away profits, so you can get a better deal, and they get fair prices for what they produce and provide. Here you can actually TALK with the farmers, hear how they grow, what their practices are – you get YOUR choice of fresh local food.

This can be a totally fun and wholesome family activity. Outside in the fresh air, developing relationships, learning...rather than scaling the fluorescent nameless aisles in "stuff" land. And, ya gotta remember, that your children will learn the value of good food and where their food comes from, and honey, it ain't from a box or some assembly line in the back of the grocery store! This is a vital lesson for children, because it will set healthy habits and awareness for the rest of their lives.

**Tip:** *if you happen to be at the farmer's market near the end of the day, you can often get price reductions because the farmer wants to sell all he or she brought. Be fair though, remember this is a partnership of sorts. Their livelihood~your health & wellbeing.*

Continued-

**Talk to the farmers.** If they are authentic organic or sustainable farmers, they'll usually be happy to talk with you about what they do. There is a healthy pride that comes from farming ethically and responsibly.

(Later, refer to Labels and Terms Page to help you ask the right questions)

### **CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)**

Some farms even have subscriptions, where each week, you get a box of their freshest, in-season produce and/or meat and dairy products delivered right to your door, or a convenient drop off location nearby. Many will even include recipes to give you ideas of how to cook what's in the box, and maybe even newsletters about the farm. You get to know where and how your food is grown and produced, and who grew it! Many will even let you visit the farm if you wish. Some give a discount if you pick it up yourself or help with the harvest- a wildly fun, educational and social opportunity for the kids! Any way you do CSA, you take part in supporting that farmer and sharing in the process and "story" of it.

### **Buy seasonally and store/ freeze-**

Local foods bought in season, not only taste best, but are also more economical.

**Tip:** When all those vine ripened heirloom tomatoes are in season, buy a bunch and whip up tomato sauce and freeze. Later, you'll have a ready made delight at your fingertips.

**Tip:** Visit a U-pick berry place when they are ripe and at their juicy best. Freeze 'em and you get an incredible amount more for the same price that gets you a dinky amount in the store otherwise.

**Bonus-** time outside with the kids- and they usually LOVE picking and eating!

### **Grow a little garden...or a few pots of greens.**

You can grow a lot of fresh, organic food, very economically in even a small space. Its a great way to connect to your food and can be very fun and rewarding.

Here's a cool thing- Its amazing how a child's (and adult's) relationship with food changes, when they actually take part in helping and watching it grow. All of a sudden, they've got a context, and an association. They end up eating vegetables they would never eat before!

Plus, you have complete control over that food. You know what soil its grown in, you know no chemicals have been used on it, and you eat it as fresh as can possibly be, with vital enzymes and nutrients bursting from their seams! And, the kids get a connection to the natural world, so important in this modern day world.

Even if you do a simple garden, you will save significant bucks. There's an initial investment to get it set up, but after that, if you use certain practices, it not a lot of work and very little money from then on. The return can be phenomenal!



## Feeling like you can't buy everything Organic or Sustainably grown? How can I pick and choose wisely wherever I shop?

Whether you're shopping at a supermarket or the Farmer's Market... know that certain conventional foods receive more pesticides than others. Knowing which ones are safer, where you can compromise some, will help you stretch your dollars and options.

**Tip:** Use this list to help you make the best choices for your bucks and bodies-  
**The Dirty Dozen and The Clean 15 - included below labels and terms**

## What do all these labels and terms mean?

Let's start with one that doesn't require labeling, but you should definitely beware - **GMO - genetically modified organism** - this is actually in many, many "foods" in the form of high fructose corn syrup, so read your labels. AVOID high fructose corn syrup. While cane sugar, especially refined is not good for us either, its not the chemical nightmare or biological experiment that is GMO.

The most common GMO crops are corn, soy, canola -when buying these foods, get organic, or from local conventional farmers who don't use GMO seeds.

**No Spray** - These vegetables and fruits are produced from conventional farming, and still uses conventional fertilizers and fungicides before fruits set, without care for soils. While the fruit or veg itself has not been sprayed with pesticides, which is one good step, they still came into being in soil that may be lacking in health, therefore they're less health giving, and still depletes environment. Its the best choice in conventional produce.

**All Natural-** this is so overused and under-regulated that it means basically nothing. It means processed minimally containing no artificial flavors, coloring or preservatives and that's it. This is a term the government came up with. Animals can still be given growth hormones and antibiotics, and they can still be fed processed and pesticide grown feed, other animals and their manure (which can lead to food borne illness), are kept in confined and crowded warehouses, given chlorine baths to kill bacteria...

**If buying these "Natural" foods, you should also be looking for "No Antibiotics or Hormones" & "No Animal By-Products" and "All-Vegetable Diet" on their labels.**

**"Cage free" or "Free Range"** chickens or eggs- while they are kept out of tiny battery cages where they can't even move, they can still have their beaks chopped off and may be housed inside dark, smelly, polluted, massively overcrowded warehouses without access to outside.....So it's not cruelty or stress free, but they can walk around and stretch their wings.

**Grass fed-** Okay, so this is a massive improvement and sound practice, and its a really good indication of healthy animal and healthy food. Such animals have usually not been given antibiotics or hormones because the animals don't get sick all the time like factory farmed animals, and are allowed to grow at their natural rate. Its usually a good marker, however, occasionally livestock raised indoors is labeled "Grass fed", where "Pasture raised" indicates that they have been raised outdoors and foraged for grasses, roots, and bugs, in the case of chickens. "Grain supplemented" can be okay, as this may serve them in winter, along with hay, but is given in limited amounts.

**Certified Naturally Grown-** this is not an organic certification, nor an official government regulated term. It is an independent program which requires that fruits and vegetables are grown with no *synthetic* fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides fungicides or GMO seeds. So this is a good bet. Many of these farmers are taking care of things well.

### **Your Best Scenarios are ~**

**Organic (and local if possible)-** just remember about the certification cost- so talk with your small farmers and see if their practices fit the criteria you have decided upon.

**Pasture Raised** - this goes for cows, chickens, pigs, (meat, eggs, milk...)

**Wild caught** - For salmon, etc. just stay away from farmed fish.

### **Good things to ask the farmers ~**

**You're looking for farmers who work with Nature, rather than against Her.**

**Animals & animal products you may eat- cows, chickens, pigs, turkeys, eggs, milk, yogurt etc.**

Are they fed organic, healthy appropriate feed and allowed to forage for their natural foods in nature? Grass fed? Pasture raised?

If not pasture raised -How much outdoor area are they given to roam in? Grass, dirt or concrete? (USDA organic animals can still be kept in very tight quarters, and fed only "organic" processed feed).

Any antibiotics or hormones?

Are they treated with care and nonviolent methods?

**Produce-**

Do you use? -

Chemicals

or produced organic fertilizers

or compost, manure, cover crops...? Think closest to the earth.

If not certified organic, do you farm sustainably, bio-dynamically, no spray...?

## **Dirty Dozen & Clean 15**

When buying conventional produce, know which have the highest pesticide residues and which have the least so you can choose wisely or avoid. Some things are less sprayed than others and things with thick or heavy skin or coverings that are removed when eaten tend to have less pesticide residue.

### **Dirty Dozen - Buy these organic or beyond organic, or avoid**

1. Apples
2. Celery
3. Strawberries

The first three above are the worst

4. Peaches
5. Spinach
6. Nectarines (imported)
7. Grapes (imported)
8. Sweet bell peppers
9. Potatoes
10. Blueberries (domestic)
11. Lettuce
12. Kale/Collard greens

### **Clean 15 - lowest in pesticides**

1. Onion
2. Corn (if not GMO)
3. Pineapples
4. Avocado
5. Asparagus
6. Sweet Peas
7. Mangoes
8. Eggplant
9. Cantaloupe (domestic)
10. Kiwi
11. Cabbage
12. Watermelon
13. Sweet Potatoes
14. Grapefruit
15. Mushrooms

## ~Food For Thought~

### **SPEAK UP**

Take a minute to talk to your grocery store manager and other store managers, even restaurant owners - tell them you want more local organic options in produce, dairy, meats...

Businesses rely on *your* purchases to keep their profits rolling in. Consumer demand has more power than you may think. The more we use our voice, dollars and fork to make our wishes known, the more options we'll receive and the more affordable it becomes for all. We are telling them what we'll buy and want, every time an item crosses that scanner. What will you be telling them?

### **DOING IT and LIVING LIFE**

Lets not make ourselves crazy. There are times when you might just want pizza delivered, or something out at a restaurant or maybe even fast food. We can be mindful to make the best choices we can in daily life. If we are eating wholesome foods at home as much as possible, on a regular basis, then we will have vastly improved our intake of nutrients as well as lessened the toxic burden on our bodies and Earth. Be patient. Its not a race or a test. Ease into, or dive into, as you like. The main thing is that you start and then it'll unfold for you. Believe it or not- it gets really fun :) , for real.

***“However we choose to feed ourselves, we eat by the grace of Nature, not industry, and what we’re eating is never anything more or less than the body of the world.”***



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