



Promoting sustainable agriculture
since 1974

PRODUCE NOTES

January 28, 2002

REPORTS FIND ORGANIC MORE NUTRITIOUS

Recent reports from both sides of the Atlantic conclude that organic is overall more nutritious than conventionally grown food.

A recent published review of 41 scientific studies from countries around the world comparing the nutrition of organic and conventionally grown foods found significantly higher nutrients in organic crops. "Nutritional Quality of Organic Versus Conventional Fruits, Vegetables, and Grains", published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine*, found organic crops, on average, contained 29.3% more magnesium, 27% more vitamin C, 21% more iron, 13.6% more phosphorus, 26% more calcium, 11% more copper, 42% more manganese, 9% more potassium and 15% lower nitrates. In crops such as spinach, lettuce, cabbage and potatoes, organically grown crops showed even higher nutritional superiority. The entire document may be read or downloaded at: www.foodisyourbestmedicine.com

Another report from the Soil Association in England also concludes that organic food may not only be safer than conventional food, but

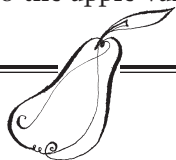
Continued bottom of page 20

CA STORAGE

Eating crisp, juicy apples year-round is possible due to controlled atmosphere storage. Known simply as "CA" in the industry, controlled atmosphere storage involves careful control of temperature, oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity.

When the proper growing and harvesting techniques are used, many varieties of apples can store for 12 months or longer in CA. Most of these apples are shipped to market between January and September. Regular refrigerated storage is used for the fruit marketed in the fall and early winter months.

CA storage is a non-chemical process. Oxygen levels in the sealed rooms are reduced. Temperatures are kept at a constant 32 to 36 degrees. Humidity is maintained at 95 percent and carbon dioxide levels are also controlled. Exact conditions in the rooms are set according to the apple variety.



WHAT'S NEW IN OUR MARKET

CA storage apples and pears are beginning to appear in many varieties. (see sidebar) This means a slight increase in price. At this time of year, we may be offering regular storage and CA storage within the same category. Your sales person will be able to identify for you which varieties and labels are CA storage because our buyers distinguish them for us.

California strawberries are arriving in good supply. Prices may start to dip a little but expect them to stay relatively high, particularly as the temperature gauge stays low.

Other **berry varieties, black, blue and raspberries** continue in good supply from the Southern Hemisphere, Chile and New Zealand.

There are also **plums** arriving into our market from Chile. It is a little disorienting to bite into a plum this time of year, but the flavor is excellent.

Bartlett pears from Argentina will begin to arrive within the next couple of weeks. Reports are that the harvest is good and the fruit will be abundant.

Mangoes from Nicaragua are finished. Next up will be **Ataulfos** from Mexico which we expect in 3-4 weeks.

T & D Willey Farms is offering new crop **RED IRISH** and **YUKON GOLD** potatoes. Prices are high, but there is nothing like a fresh dug potato this time of year. You will absolutely taste the difference.

Hass avocados from Chile are finished for the season. New crop Hass are beginning to ship from Southern California and the Santa Barbara area. New crop Hass will take longer to ripen so buy ahead so that you have ripe avocados to offer for Super Bowl Sunday, February 3rd.

1100 Cesar Chavez Street
San Francisco, California 94124
voice: 415 641.3500
fax: 415 641.3505

THE WAX FACTOR

Over the past couple of weeks, our sales staff has received many questions about wax on fruit and vegetables. Here is a reprinting from an edition of our produce notes about wax.

The use of wax on organic produce is an issue for organic buyers and shoppers who don't expect to find wax on organic produce. While most organic produce is not waxed, some is. Organic produce is waxed for the same reasons conventional produce is waxed: to keep produce fresh and to make it look appealing. Yet, many shoppers perceive wax as a preservative used on conventional produce. They don't want it on the organic fruits and vegetables that they purchase, and many produce departments are at a loss when faced with addressing these concerns. Here is a rundown on some of the facts about wax.

WHY WAX? After produce is picked and packed, dehydration starts to occur. Wax slows this process down by providing a protective coating to seal in moisture. Conventional produce packers are accustomed to using wax and hence, wax is used much

REPORTS FIND ORGANIC MORE NUTRITIOUS, cont. from front page

also healthier. The 87-page Organic Farming, Food Quality and Human Health is a compendium of 400 published papers comparing organic and non-organic foods in terms of food safety, nutritional content and the observed health effects from consuming such foods. This report contradicts what groups such as the British Food Standards Agency (FSA) have stated: that organic and conventional foods offer no nutritional differences. "On average, we found that organic crops are not only higher in Vitamin C and essential minerals, but also higher in phytonutrients, compounds which protect plants from pests and disease and are often beneficial in the treatment of cancer," stated Patrick Holden, director of the Soil Association. "Farming methods can make a significant difference to levels of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients." The report's authors also found a long-term decline in trace minerals in conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, most likely due to farming practices. In regard to public concerns, feeding trials have shown that growth, reproductive health and recovery rate improve in animals fed organic feed. The report concluded that more research is needed in this matter. The Soil Association can be reached at: www.soilassociation.org

Reprinted from the CCOF Newsletter, Winter 2001 ■

more frequently on conventional produce than organic. While a shopper may encounter a whole array of waxed conventional produce—from apples to zucchini—they are unlikely to encounter any waxed organic produce other than citrus and cucumbers.

WHICH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ARE WAXED?

APPLES: Organic apples are rarely waxed. Apples produce an abundance of natural wax, especially the good winter keepers like Fuji, Granny Smith, Red Delicious and Pippins. This natural wax or "bloom", will increase with: time in storage, an increase in heat and/or an increase in humidity. These conditions can cause a thick, waxy layer to form that is completely natural.

CITRUS: Lemons, limes, grapefruit, oranges and tangerines are the most frequently waxed organic items. Citrus produces its own wax, but after a thorough washing on the packing line, wax may be needed so the fruit doesn't dry out. Because they ship fruit worldwide, most of the large citrus packers use wax.

CUCUMBERS: Cucumbers are sometimes waxed in the winter months. Cucumbers are so high in water that they may need added wax to keep firm and crisp, especially in the winter months when they're coming from Mexico or southern points in the U.S. They have a long ride from the farm to the grocer's dock.

TOMATOES, BELL PEPPERS and EGGPLANT: These are rarely waxed although they sometimes appear waxed. As on many other fruits and vegetables, this wax is a natural protective coating produced by the plant. If in doubt, check the box label or ask the supplier.

WHAT IS ORGANIC WAX? Accepted sources include carnauba or wood rosin wax. They must not contain any prohibited synthetic substances. Products that are coated with allowed or regulated wax must be indicated as such on the shipping container. Organic waxes must be certifier approved.

EATING WAX. Keep in mind that while wax is not digestible, chemicals impregnated in the wax, like fungicides, can be absorbed. That's why it's a good idea to peel conventional waxed fruit and veggies. Produce should always be washed before eating but don't count on washing to remove the wax.

RETAILERS ARE REQUIRED TO USE WAX SIGNAGE. The FDA requires all retail stores to post information in their produce department as to which items may be waxed. The lettering needs to be at least 1/4" high, and should include: "Coated with food grade vegetable-, petroleum-beeswax, and/or shellac-based wax or resin". Also, the FDA requires wax labeling on produce boxes. When in doubt as to whether produce is waxed check the box or ask the supplier. Fungicides added to wax are required to be listed on the box as well.■