

Eating Local and Organic: Part I by Janie Chu

MENTION A PASSION about organic and local foods, and any attempt to discuss it is often met with an eye-rolling, pre-conceived notions attitude. I'm frequently dismissed as a tree-hugging, excessively indulgent yuppie who is just succumbing to a trend of the here and now, because it's cool. Before you berate me, just remember you're dealing with an independent, non-label musician who still clips coupons, loves a bargain and is scrimping and pinching to find ways to fund a new album. I'm not trying to maintain facades of an exorbitant lifestyle so much as to maintain one that has dramatically improved quality of life. Let me explain.

A few years ago I was diagnosed with an incurable, autoimmune disorder that also affected the digestive system. In addition to painful and serious symptoms, my life turned upside down as I overhauled my diet to accommodate my rapidly deteriorating health. I was first introduced to specialty products at Whole Foods and various natural grocery stores that, while more expensive gave me options to have a sense of normalcy.

Fast forward to 2006, when a dramatic and educational experience allowed me to not only return to robust health, but my previous symptoms with this autoimmune disorder disappeared completely! Part of this is due to a revolutionary diet plan discovered by Jordan Rubin ([The Maker's Diet](#)). It advocates eating what nature intended: Non-processed, organic foods that are farmed with care. By following most of what is advocated, I've seen my physical body reward me from the inside out, freeing it from the times I used to flood it with junk.

The truth is, our bodies were never meant to consume the kinds of products our post-modern society churns out daily. We're still hard-wired to operate like we did in ancient times, eating as close to nature as possible. Lacing our fresh produce with pesticides or anti-ripening agents not only ruins the flavor of the food, but it can often ruin the nutritional value as well. Did you know that an organic tomato has twice¹ the amount of anti-oxidant flavonoids² as a conventional one? This not only includes protective properties against cancer, heart disease and aging, but also shows that the plant's own self-defense (called phenolics³) retains the nutritional value that is all but destroyed with synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. This is backed by science!

You might be thinking at this point that, while it may not just be a marketing ploy, how can I afford to buy organic foods when they're typically more expensive and harder to find? These days it's much easier. Trader Joes

offers an array of cheap, organic produce along with conventional grocery stores like Publix and Kroger that have expanded their offerings. With a little research, you can find natural food stores near you that stock inexpensive, locally grown organic produce. Even Whole Foods has brought down some prices to compete. While I realize that eating organic is not always possible, you can still control what you eat at home, and supporting local food initiatives at restaurants such as those at www.georgiaorganics.org. Your body will thank you.

In the next issue: Why organic and local foods help the environment.

¹From Times Online UK - July 2007 Issue. Article titled "Organic Fruits And Vegetables Really Are Better For Your Heart"

²From the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry. (ACS Publications). "Healthful Compounds In Tomatoes Increase Over Time In Organic Fields"

³From ShapeFit at <http://www.shapefit.com/organic-foods.html>. Further described in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry in "Total Phenolic And Ascorbic Acid Content of...Using Conventional, Organic And Sustainable Agricultural Practices" Jan. 2004.



JANIE CHU, trained in piano music at the age of 6 and commercial music in college, is an Atlanta based artist whose music continues to reach new fans through various media channels including 98.3 FM Whitley City, KY.

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February 26, 2008