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Dirty Dozen & Clean 15

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) evaluates fruits and vegetables to determine their overall **pesticide exposure**. The Dirty Dozen and Clean 15 help consumers prioritize which foods are most important to purchase organic when trying to limit pesticide exposure. The clean 15 lists are foods with a lower amount of pesticides.

The lists are determined by evaluating six factors and scoring each item. The dirty dozen are the 12 fruits and vegetables with the highest pesticide loads. The Clean 15 are the fruits and vegetables with the least pesticide residue.

Recently, the EWG has added a “plus” category to their dirty dozen to include select foods that contain trace amounts of highly hazardous pesticides. They don’t meet the traditional standards to be included in the list, yet are included as a plus due to insecticide contamination.

Clean 15: Doesn’t Need to be Organic

1. Asparagus
2. Avocados
3. Cabbage
4. Cantaloupe
5. Cauliflower
6. Eggplant
7. Mushrooms
8. Kiwi
9. Honeydew melon
10. Onions
11. Papayas*
12. Pineapples
13. Sweet corn
14. Sweet peas (frozen)`
15. Broccoli

Some Papayas, sweet corn, and summer squash sold in the USA are from Genetically Modified seeds.

Dirty 12: Always Choose Organic

1. Strawberries
2. Spinach
3. Kale
4. Apples
5. Grapes
6. Nectarines
7. Peaches
8. Potatoes
9. Cherries
10. Tomatoes
11. Celery
12. Pears

+ hot peppers
+ Sweet bell peppers
+ leafy greens

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How to choose Non-GMO food

First, you have to know what are GMOs?
The term genetically engineered (GE) or genetic modification (GM) of food involves the laboratory process of artificially inserting genes from organisms such as bacteria, viruses or animals and inserting them into other, often unrelated, species into the DNA of food crops or animals. The result is a genetically modified organism or GMO.
Why Should I Be Concerned About GMOs?
Genetic engineering creates new organisms that do not occur in nature, producing new and unpredictable health and environmental risks. Preliminary evidence on health risks can be found at the Institute of Responsible Technology.
Many people do not want to eat GMOs, but the United States does not require labeling, making it difficult to identify them.
Use these tips to help you find and avoid GMO foods and ingredients.
NOTE: Hybridization, when plants with favorable characteristics are bred together, is not a form of genetic engineering or genetic modification according to the biotechnology definitions.
I want to help you identify foods with GMOs, including organic ones.

How Can I Find GMO-free or non-GMO Foods?
There are 3 ways to find GMO-free or non-GMO foods.

1. Choose Organic products

The use of genetically engineered organisms is prohibited under USDA organic standards. Organic foods are grown without the use of synthetic chemicals or irradiation. The best way to avoid GMOs is to purchase 100% certified organic products.

2. Look for Non-GMO Project Verified Seal

The Non-GMO Project is North America's only independent verification for non-GMO products. Products that have passed the Non-GMO Project's independent verification process are issued a seal of approval.

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The Non-GMO verified seal assures consumers that these products have been produced according to consensus-based best practices for GMO. To receive the label, a product has to be certified as containing ingredients with less than 1% genetic modification. Some products may be non-GMO but have not gone through the Non-GMO Project process.

3. Avoid At-Risk Ingredients
Approximately 93% of soy, 88% of field corn, 94% cotton, and over 90% of canola seed and sugar beets planted in the U.S. are genetically engineered.
Some of the most common genetically engineered are

- Corn
  Corn flour, meal, oil, starch, gluten, and syrup
  Sweeteners such as fructose, dextrose, and glucose
  Modified food starch*
- Soy
  Soy flour, lecithin, protein, isolate, and isoflavones
- Vegetable oil and vegetable protein**
  Canola & Canola oil (also called rapeseed oil)
  Cotton
  Cottonseed oil
- Sugar
  Anything not listed as 100% cane sugar

+ Foods more likely to be genetically modified are papaya from Hawaii or China, zucchini, and yellow squash.

*May be derived from wheat, potato or tapioca
**May be derived from sunflower, safflower, or similar seeds

Gold Standard: buying products both certified organic and Non-GMO project verified.

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Consumer tips

There is more to learn in this confusing topic but keep in mind these suggestions:

- Eating organic foods reduces pesticide exposure and the consumption of harmful chemicals.
- Minimize processed food, most contain GMO derivates (corn and soy, for example)
- Select the most frequent food or drinks you consume and buy a better version of that
- Buy food from farmers you know how they treat their crops.
- Keep in mind that sometimes "healthy foods" like kale have high pesticide level, so buy them organic only.
- Avoid food with food labels with corn meal, corn syrup, dextrose, soy protein, soy lecithin, maltodextrin, citric acid, and lactic acid.
- Monitor any food sensitivities and how they relate to these foods.
- In restaurants ask "What oil do you cook with?" and try to avoid vegetable oils, margarine, or oil blends.
- Avoid tabletop sweetener aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal, Amino Sweet) which is genetically modified.
- Look for the Glyphosate Residue-free Certification (often found in oats and wheat).
- DCPA (herbicide) is banned in the European nation as a possible human carcinogen; surprisingly, it is still allowed in the USA. Found in well water, fish, and many fruits and vegetables.
- Even after washing, peeling, and scrubbing many vegetables and fruits they still have chemical residues.
- Some of the foods that may contain GMO ingredients: instant formula, salad dressings, bread, candy, fried food, chips, ice cream, frozen yogurt, tofu, tomato sauce, protein powder, alcohol, peanut butter, sugar ad pasta.
- Remember it is your responsibility to learn; USDA does not test for all pesticides used, like glyphosate or roundup, the most used. Even high levels are found in many grains, beans, and oats.