



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Organic produce makes debut in Europe

*By Gerri Young,  
DeCA Europe public affairs officer*

**KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany** – For DeCA Europe commissary customers interested in organic produce, satisfaction is here.

Six stores in Germany – Ramstein, Vogelweh, Heidelberg, Patch Barracks, Mannheim and Grafenwoehr – began carrying the produce in late January and a full-scale demo and cooking show took place at the Vogelweh Commissary shortly thereafter. DeCA Europe plans to expand the organic produce program regionwide.

Randi Robinson, DeCA Europe produce specialist, worked with the Vogelweh Commissary and specialists from both the Wasgau company in Pirmasens and the Goerger Kies company in Karlsruhe, Germany, to put the plan together.

A couple dozen fruit and vegetable selections formed a large display and a one-day special offered by the company attracted customers to buy one package, get one free. Internationally trained chef Alfred Fahr instructed customers in how to cook three different dishes using all organic ingredients. The pan-fried potatoes, vegetable pan and caramelized fruits were a warm and wonderful hit with customers who had braved ugly weather to learn more about organics.

“There is no proof organics are healthier to eat than traditional produce,” said Robinson, “but more customers than ever are interested in purchasing items grown in a more eco-friendly manner. Because of this, we started working with the Wasgau company in hopes of obtaining a supplier for our stores.

“We have excellent working relationships with this company which owns 140 grocery stores in Germany,” Robinson continued, “and we continually learn from each other. DeCA Europe is their only wholesale customer. They contacted a company about two hours south of Kaiserslautern and a plan was formed. To meet American specifications for segregating organic from traditional produce, the 30 items available to us are hand selected and packaged; a process done only for DeCA Europe.”

The early trials for the organic produce have used about half the available selection. “As we work through our first month in six of our stores, we are watching what sells and will fine-tune the selection,” said Robinson.

The scheduled cooking demo was publicized on American Forces Network, Europe radio and several customers showed up just because they heard the announcements. Kathy Gregory, manager of the nearby Fisher House in Landstuhl, happened upon the demo and stayed to learn, taste and take advantage of the bargain. “It’s delicious,” she said about the warm fruit. “Can’t beat the bargain either, so I got some for myself and my co-workers, too.”

In addition to the Vogelweh cooking demo, the region also featured organic produce in a display at the annual European Command Quality of Life Conference in March.

**- DeCA-**

### **Photo captions:**

**Organics, DeCA, Wasgau Group** – Organic produce is introduced in style at the Vogelweh Commissary thanks to the consolidated efforts of DeCA Europe and the produce supplier, Wasgau, from Pirmasens, Germany. Overlooking the organic display are (l-r) Mirko Krause from Company Goerger Kies; Hans-Juergen Kirsch, Wasgau; Jo-Ann Murphy, Wasgau; Randi Robinson, DeCA Europe; Udo Hussong, Vogelweh Commissary and Stephan Hartwig, Wasgau. (DeCA photo by Gerri Young)

**Organics, Kathy Gregory and Alfred the cook** –Kathy Gregory, manager of the Landstuhl Fisher House, listens to professional cook, Alfred Fahr, tell how to prepare caramelized fruit from organic produce. The demonstration at the Vogelweh Commissary is part of the introduction of organic produce to selected commissaries in Europe. (DeCA photo by Gerri Young)

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit*

*and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*