



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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### **‘Going Green’ with organic fruits, vegetables**

*By Lt. Col. (USAR) Karen E. Hawkins,  
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**FORT LEE, Va.** – Going organic doesn’t have to be all or nothing when it comes to feeding your family. You may decide to buy organic foods for the health benefits, along with helping reduce the impact of farming – as they are raised in a sustainable way. “Going Green” with choosing organic foods on a budget is possible with a little planning.

Learning the “dirty dozen” is a good place to start. For example, apples may have some of the highest levels of pesticides of any food. However, not everything needs to be organic – avocados, for example, are typically safe.

Organic foods typically have fewer pesticides and, on average, more nutrients. Pesticides may be absorbed into fruits and vegetables, along with leaving trace residues. The Environmental Working Group – a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization – reviewed nearly 51,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Food and Drug Administration tests for pesticides on 44 popular produce items. They identified the types of fruits and vegetables that were most likely to have higher trace amounts.

As for nutrients, in 2007, a study showed that organic produce had up to 40 percent higher levels of nutrients – such as vitamin C, zinc and iron – than similar conventional fruits and vegetables. A 2003 study in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry found organically grown berries and corn had 58 percent more antioxidants, which help prevent heart disease. This may be contributed to the nitrogen in the soil and how it is slowly released.

Buying local fruits and vegetables is a good choice, too. Nutrients are at their greatest level when fruits and vegetables reach ripeness – just after harvest. Usually, the less the produce has to travel, the fresher and higher it is in nutrients.

The 12 best foods to buy organic are apples, carrots, celery, cherries, grapes, kale, lettuce, nectarines, peaches, pears, peppers (bell) and strawberries.

Whether or not you choose organic, just eating fruits and vegetables every day is beneficial for your good health. Organic foods are available at your commissary at savings of 30 percent or more.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

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**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 \$3,300 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.*