

Organic Food's Trendy Transformation

Even though our nation's fast-food chains seem to be saturated with the ever growing "Biggie-Sized" drink and fries, hope for a healthier option is building on the horizon. According to the most recent National Restaurant Association trade show, one the newest trends in the food world is the sales of organic foods. Gone are the days when "organic food" fell synonymously with hippie tofu-burgers.

In fact, organic foods have become the fastest growing segment in the U.S. food sales market. Their sales increased to \$14 billion last year, which is an \$8 billion jump from five years ago. According to the Organic Trade Association (OTA), these figures are projected to double within the next five years. Organic foods are also becoming the new hot commodity for many of our countries restaurants who, according to United Natural Food's sales-representative Doug Goeltl, "don't want to be left behind" in the new growing trend.

This recent trend shift toward organic foods couldn't come at a better time with three out of four Americans admitting to their need for a healthier diet. The growing community of organic farmers, like California's Earthbound Farms, has made this formidable change in healthy options possible. Earthbound Farms, located just south of San Francisco, is the largest organic produce grower in the U.S., with 28,000 acres producing more than 100 different types of fruits and vegetables.

Companies like Earthbound Farms are more than pleased with our recent inclinations toward healthier options. This is especially true now that supermarket chains like Wal-Mart, Albertson's, and Safeway are jumping on the health-food wagon. However, according to experts, this recent addition to our family grocery aisle has its pros and cons.

Michael Pollan, a professor of journalism at the University of California, Berkley, believes that expanding the demand for organic foods on such a large scale may end up causing farmers to skimp on food quality standards and thus substantially lowering the quality of their product. Experts also believe that with the entrance of such large supermarket competitors, Wal-Mart especially, organic produce may end up becoming a commodity where the actual buyers dictate the prices. In this case, farmers could find themselves in a tight space as big-name retailers may try to work them over for the lowest price.

On the other hand, many believe that this new organic food adoption is a good thing for supermarkets to get involved with. Promoters like, executive director of the Organic Farming Research Foundation, Bob Scowcroft, feel that these large retailers will help bring the sale of organics to "a whole new economic stratum" that food stores have never been able to reach before.

Earthbound Farm's founder, Myra Goodman, also reminds us that almost all of our food comes through supermarkets, not sparsely located high-end retailers like Whole Foods Markets. That being the case, why shouldn't the average shoppers have their own organic choice.

For more information on organics food's trendy transformation, contact the FoodWise Group at www.foodwisegroup.com.

Sources include: Associated Press & Orlando Sentinel