

# Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods

In order to have the best foods on our tables, in our refrigerators and for home food preservation we need the freshest food possible. This may seem like a simple task when we use terms like:

- In Season
- Fresh
- Local
- Organic
- Natural

Now define and more importantly, *quantify* these terms. *Oh-oh!* Seems like we need a degree program to do this! So this little 'note' contains what I found out about these terms and how I go about trying to insure the best of the best for me and mine.



## What does “in season” mean?

Good question and depending on where you go for the answer will depend on what answer you get.

Of course there is the “in season” for breeding of animals as one meaning and then there is the “in season” when it comes to produce.

In this instance “in season” typically refers to the time of year a particular fruit, vegetable, grain, nut and other plant foods are ripe and ready for the picking. It is also the time of year these items are not only the easiest to find but at their cheapest too. There are also “seasons” when particular fish and game is available too.

Seasonal food was practiced since ancient civilizations as people ate what mother nature produced which varied according to seasons.

## Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods - Continued

In 8th century, however, the choice of what to eat in every season became a conscious social event.

Seasonality of food refers to the times of year when a given type food is at its peak, either in terms of harvest or its flavor. This is usually the time when the item is the cheapest and the freshest on the market. The food's peak time in terms of harvest usually coincides with when its flavor is at its best.

There are some exceptions; an example being sweet potatoes which are best eaten quite a while after harvest.

In contrast, **summer** diet consisted of green beans, radish, lettuces, chicories, aubergine, carrots, cucumber, gherkins, watercress, marrow, courgettes, and rice. The meat accompanied these vegetables consisted mainly of poultry, ostrich and beef products. Fruity deserts included fruits such as lemon, lime quinces, nectarines, mulberry, cherries, plums, apricot, grapes, pomegranates, watermelon, pears, apple, and melon. Meanwhile, the drinks involved syrups and jams. Fruit pastels, lemon, rose, jasmine, ginger and fennel.

In **autumn**, meals included cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, celery, gourd, wheat, barley, millet, turnips, parsnips, onions, acorns, pulses, and olive oil. Drinks incorporated aromatic herbs and flower distillations of essential oils.

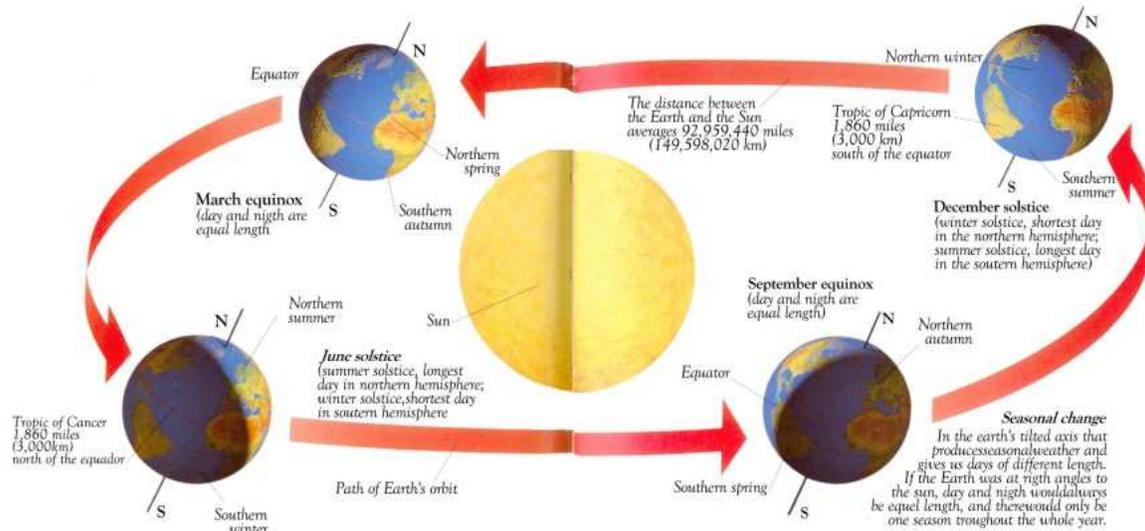
In **spring**, meals consisted of onions, gourd, spinach roquette salad, asparagus, lettuces, marrow, fennel, artichokes, fresh broad beans, lemons, cardoons, truffles, peas, wild artichokes, beetroot, basil, mint, sweet marjoram, saffron, green barley, pigeons, lamb and dairy products. Drinks involved lemon and mint syrup, distillation of orange blossom, rose and other herbs for winter.

Traditionally in **winter** is when preserved foods were utilized. Whatever had been stored in root cellars, smoked, cured, canned, pickled, fermented or 'put aside' for this harshest of seasons was eaten.



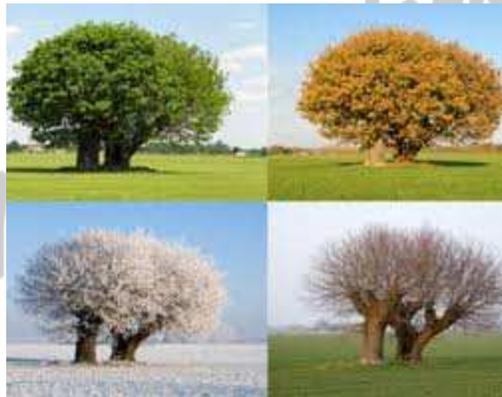
There has been considerable controversy about how far people should be encouraged to eat seasonal food. In 2008, the chef Gordon Ramsay attracted media coverage when he stated that restaurants should be fined for serving non-seasonal food. In September and October 2008, Valentine Warner presented a program for BBC Two, entitled 'What to Eat Now', persuading people to consume seasonal food.

### Primary Cause of the Seasons:



The tilt of the Earth's axis relative to its orbital plane plays a big role in the weather. The Earth is tilted at an angle of 23.44° to the plane of its orbit, and this causes different latitudes on the Earth to directly face the Sun as the Earth moves through its orbit. It is this variation that primarily brings about the seasons.

**What are the seasons for North America?** Ooohhh great question! Scientifically there are three basic ways the dates for the seasons are determined:



**Astronomical basis**

The instances at which the solstices and equinoxes occur can be accurately calculated. Earlier astronomical textbooks often defined the four seasons as starting on the dates of the corresponding equinoxes and solstices.

**Climatological basis**

A further failing of the earlier astronomically defined seasons is that they simply did not describe the real seasons as actually experienced. In the temperate latitudes of Europe and North America the climatological seasons are conventionally defined as shown below. The equivalent seasons in the southern hemisphere are of course six months out of phase with those in the northern hemisphere.

<b>Southern Hemisphere</b>	<b>Calendar dates</b>	<b>Northern Hemisphere</b>
<b>Autumn</b>	<b>1 March to 31 May</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<b>Winter</b>	<b>1 June to 31 August</b>	<b>Summer</b>
<b>Spring</b>	<b>1 September to 30 November</b>	<b>Autumn</b>
<b>Summer</b>	<b>1 December to 28/29 February</b>	<b>Winter</b>

**Phenological basis**

Phenological phenomena (this is, those relating to the natural seasonal behavior of plants and animals) are the most fundamental markers of the changing seasons. This can be seen from the etymology of the names of the seasons in various languages. Thus in English, spring, from Anglo-Saxon for rise or burst forth, is the season when sap rises and plants put out buds. Autumn, from early Latin for ripen, is the season when crops reach maturity and can be harvested.

Unfortunately, an appeal to the phonological seasons merely confounds the confusion. In parts of Europe the phonological seasons are taken to occur one month earlier than the conventional climatic season, where in other parts and in the USA the two systems coincide.

As a side note did you know? South Africa does not really experience four distinct seasons. Throughout South Africa the transitional seasons of Autumn and Spring tend to be very short. Most analysis of climate is done using the assumption that January is mid-summer and July min-winter.

**Seasons of the United States:**



**Spring** is one of the four temperate seasons, the transition period between winter and summer. Spring and "springtime" refer to the season, and broadly to ideas of rebirth, renewal and regrowth. The specific definition of the exact timing of "spring" varies according to local climate, cultures and customs. At the spring equinox, days are close to 12 hours long with day length increasing as the season progresses.

In spring, the axis of the Earth is increasing its tilt toward the Sun and the length of daylight rapidly increases for the relevant hemisphere. The hemisphere begins to warm significantly causing new plant growth to "spring forth," giving the season its name.

Spring is seen as a time of growth, renewal, of new life (both plant and animal) being born. The term is also used more generally as a metaphor for the start of better times, as in the Prague Spring.

**Summer** is the warmest of the four temperate seasons, between spring and autumn. At the summer solstice, the days are longest and the nights are shortest, with day-length decreasing as the season progresses after the solstice. The date of the beginning of summer varies according to climate, culture, and tradition, but when it is summer in the southern hemisphere it is winter in the northern hemisphere, and vice versa.

From an astronomical view, the equinoxes and solstices would be the middle of the respective seasons, but a variable seasonal lag means that the meteorological start of the season, which is based on average temperature patterns, occurs several weeks later than the start of the astronomical season.<sup>[1]</sup> According to meteorologists, summer extends for the whole months of June, July, and August in the northern hemisphere and the whole months of December, January, and February in the southern hemisphere.<sup>[2]</sup> This meteorological definition of summer also aligns with the commonly viewed notion of summer as the season with the longest (and warmest) days of the year (365 days), in which daylight predominates.

**Winter** is the coldest season of the year in temperate climates, between autumn and spring. At the winter solstice, the days are shortest and the nights are longest, with days lengthening as the season progresses after the solstice.

Meteorological winter is the season having the shortest days and the lowest average temperatures, which have the coldest weather. This corresponds to the months of December, January and February in the Northern Hemisphere, and June, July and August in the Southern Hemisphere. The coldest average temperatures of the season are typically experienced in January in the Northern hemisphere and in June or July in the Southern hemisphere.

Astronomically, the winter solstice, being the day of the year which has fewest hours of daylight, ought to be the middle of the season, but seasonal lag means that the coldest period normally follows the solstice by a few weeks. In the USA (and sometimes in Britain) the season is regarded as beginning at the solstice and ending on the following equinox — in the Northern Hemisphere, depending on the year, this corresponds to the period between 21 or 22 December and 20 or 21 March.

During winter in either hemisphere, the lower altitude of the Sun in winter causes the sunlight to hit that hemisphere at an oblique angle. In regions experiencing winter, the same amount of solar radiation is spread out over a larger area. This effect is compounded by the larger distance that the light must travel through the atmosphere, allowing the atmosphere to dissipate more heat. Compared with these effects, the changes in the distance of the earth from the sun are negligible.

**Autumn** (also **fall** in American English) is one of the four temperate seasons. Autumn marks the transition from summer into winter usually in September (Northern Hemisphere) or March (Southern Hemisphere) when the arrival of night becomes noticeably earlier.

The equinoxes might be expected to be in the middle of their respective seasons, but temperature lag (caused by the thermal latency of the ground and sea) means that seasons appear later than dates calculated from a purely astronomical perspective. The actual lag varies with region. Some cultures regard the autumnal equinox as "mid-autumn", others with a longer lag treat it as the start of autumn.<sup>[1]</sup>

Meteorologists (and most of the temperate countries in the southern hemisphere)<sup>[2]</sup> use a definition based on months, with autumn being September, October and November in the northern hemisphere,<sup>[3]</sup> and March, April and May in the southern hemisphere.



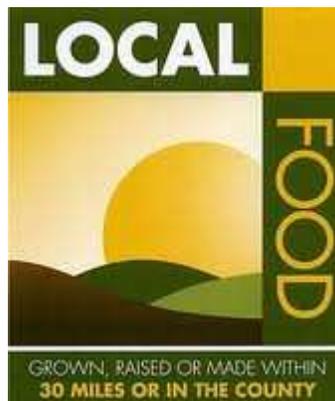
In North America, autumn is usually considered to start with the September equinox.

### What is Fresh or Local Food?



Fresh Food is basically food that is not preserved by canning, dehydration, freezing, curing, smoking or any other preservation method other than storing as is.

*Local food* is, by definition, food produced locally. Whether the seed - an integral part of the "food" - was grown or procured locally as well is usually left out of this definition, leading to even greater ambiguity as to its meaning. Many local food proponents tend to equate it with food produced by local independent farmers, while equating non-local food with food produced and transformed by large agribusiness. (I fall into this category)



There is no single definition of "'local' or 'local food systems' in terms of the geographic distance between production and consumption. But defining 'local' based on marketing arrangements, such as farmers selling directly to consumers at regional farmers' markets or to schools, is well recognized.

There are "a number of different definitions for local [that] have been used or recorded by researchers assessing local food systems [and] most [are] informed by political or geographic boundaries. Among the more widely circulated and popular defining parameters is the concept of food miles, which has been suggested for policy recommendations."



In 2008 Congress passed H.R.2419 which amended the "Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act". In the amendment "locally" and "regionally" are grouped together and are defined as:

“(I) the locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product; or “(II) the State in which the product is produced.

– [Bill Text - 110th Congress \(2007-2008\) - THOMAS \(Library of Congress\)](#)

In May 2010 the USDA acknowledged this definition in an informational leaflet.

Some local business with specific retail and production focuses, such as cheese, may take a larger view of what is 'local' while a local farm may see the area within a day's driving as local because it is a reasonable distance to transport goods and services—in fact, 400 miles is essentially a DGD (day-goods-distance).



Some proponents of "local food" consider that the term "local" has little to do with distance or with the size of a "local" area. For example, some see the American state of Texas as being "local", although it is much larger than some European countries. In this case, transporting a food product across Texas could involve a longer distance than that between northern and southern European countries.

Where local food is determined by the distance it has traveled, the wholesale distribution system can confuse the calculations. Fresh food that is grown very near to where it will be purchased, may still travel hundreds of miles out of the area through the industrial system before arriving back at a local store. This is seen as a labeling issue by local food advocates, who suggest that, at least in the case of fresh food, consumers should be able to see exactly how far each food item has traveled.

## Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods - Continued

Often, products are grown in one area and processed in another, which may cause complications in the purchasing of local foods. In the international wine industry, much "bulk wine" is shipped to other regions or continents, to be blended with wine from other locales. It may even be marketed quite misleadingly as a product of the bottling country. This is in direct opposition to both the concept of "local food" and the concept of terroir.



The USDA included statistics about the growing local food market in the leaflet released in May 2010. The statistics are as follows; "Direct-to-consumer marketing amounted to \$1.2 billion in current dollar sales in 2007, according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, compared with \$551 million in 1997. Direct-to-consumer sales accounted for 0.4 percent of total agricultural sales in 2007, up from 0.3 percent in 1997. If nonedible products are excluded from total agricultural sales, direct-to-consumer sales accounted for 0.8 percent of agricultural sales in 2007. The number of farmers' markets rose to 5,274 in 2009, up from 2,756 in 1998 and 1,755 in 1994, according to USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. In 2005, there were 1,144 community-supported agriculture organizations (CSAs) in operation, up from 400 in 2001 and 2 in 1986, according to a study by the nonprofit, nongovernmental organization National Center for Appropriate Technology.

The number of farm to school programs, which use local farms as food suppliers for school meals programs, increased to 2,095 in 2009, up from 400 in 2004 and 2 in the 1996-97 school year, according to the National Farm to School Network. Data from the 2005 School Nutrition and Dietary Assessment Survey, sponsored by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, showed that 14 percent of school districts participated in Farm to School programs, and 16 percent reported having guidelines for purchasing locally grown produce



As large corporations and supermarket distribution increasingly dominate the organic food market, the concept of local food, and sometimes 'sustainable food', is increasingly being used by independent farmers, food activists, and aware consumers to refine the definition of organic food and organic agriculture.

By this measure, food that is certified organic but not grown locally is viewed as possibly "less organic" or not of the same overall quality or benefit, as locally grown organic products.





Fundamentally, almost all foodstuffs are derived from the natural products of plants and animals and therefore any definition of natural food results in an arbitrary exclusion or inclusion of food ingredients; likewise, since almost all foods are processed in some way, either mechanically, chemically, or by temperature, it is difficult to define which types of food processing is natural.



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**United Kingdom** - Definition by process and by product: "In the United Kingdom, the Food Standards

Agency published criteria for the use of several terms in food labeling. The guidance, in general, restricts the use of natural to foods that have "ingredients produced by nature, not the work of man or interfered with by man."

Natural flavorings are explicitly defined by separate laws.

There are different standards for various types of food, such as dairy products. It also gives standards for some food processing techniques, such as fermentation or pasteurization. The standard explicitly rules out "foods derived from novel processes, GM or cloning."

**Canada & Israel** - Definition by process only:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency restricts the use of "natural" to foods that have not been significantly altered by processing and gives examples of processes that do or do not significantly alter food. This includes two specific additional requirements;

A natural food or ingredient of a food is not expected to contain, or to ever have contained, an added vitamin, mineral nutrient, artificial flavoring agent or food additive.

A natural food or ingredient of a food does not have any constituent or fraction thereof removed or significantly changed, except the removal of water.

**In Israel**, natural ingredients are defined as part of the Labelling of Prepacked Food Standard (Israeli Standard SI 1145, which is legally binding).

The standard offers a list of 33 processes which are allowed in natural ingredients, all of which are physical treatments and not chemical modifications. These include blending, cleaning, extrusion, freezing, drying, etc.

A specific ingredient can be called "natural" if it didn't go through any processing except for the listed ones. The whole food can be called "natural" if the food is not a blend of foods (even if they are all natural), has no added ingredients, and underwent only the specified processes.

**United States - *No legal definition***: In the United States, neither the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) nor the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has rules for "natural." The FDA explicitly discourages the food industry from using the term. The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act prohibits labeling that is false or misleading, but does not give any specifics. The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service has a standard for organic food.



Because there is no legal meaning for natural foods, food manufacturers can include ingredients that may not be considered natural by some consumers.

The poultry industry has been criticized by the Center for Science in the Public Interest for labeling chicken meat "all natural" after it has been injected with saline solution up to 25% of its weight, but there is no legal recourse to prevent this labeling.

Although there is no legal U.S. definition for natural foods, there are numerous unofficial or informal definitions, none of which is applied uniformly to foods labeled "natural".

### What is Organic Food?



## Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods - Continued

Organic foods are foods that are produced using methods that do not involve modern synthetic inputs such as pesticides and chemical fertilizers, do not contain genetically modified organisms, and are not processed using irradiation, industrial solvents, or chemical food additives.

For the vast majority of human history, agriculture can be described as "organic"; only during the 20th century was a large supply of new synthetic chemicals introduced to the food supply. The organic farming movement arose in the 1940s in response to the industrialization of agriculture known as the Green Revolution.

Organic food production is a heavily regulated industry, distinct from private gardening. Currently, the European Union, the United States, Canada, Japan and many other countries require producers to obtain special certification in order to market food as "organic" within their borders. In the context of these regulations, "organic food" is food made in a way that complies with organic standards set by national governments and international organizations. In the United States, organic production is a system that is managed in accordance with the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990 and regulations in Title 7, Part 205 of the Code of Federal Regulations to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. If livestock are involved, the livestock must be reared with regular access to pasture and without the routine use of antibiotics or growth hormones.<sup>[4]</sup> In most countries, organic produce may not be genetically modified. It has been suggested that the application of nanotechnology to food and agriculture is a further technology that needs to be excluded from certified organic food. The Soil Association (UK) has been the first organic certifier to implement a nano-exclusion.



The USDA runs the National Organic Program, which regulates the legal definition of what organic food is. Other countries also have programs to regulate organic food definitions.

European Organic Farmland in 2005

Country	Area (ha)	Percent (%)
Belgium	22,994	1.7
Czech Republic	254,982	7.2
Cyprus	2	1.1
Denmark	134,129	5.2
Finland	147,587	6.5
France	560,838	2
Germany	807,406	4.7
Greece	288,737	7.2

## Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods - Continued

Hungary	128,576	2
Ireland	34,912	0.8
Italy	1,069,462	8.4
Latvia	118,612	7
Lithuania	64,544	2.3
Luxembourg	3,158 *	2.4
Malta	14	0.1
Netherlands	48,765	2.5
Austria	360,369	11
Poland	82,730 *	2.4
Portugal	233,458	6.3
Sweden	222,268	6.2
Switzerland		11
Slovakia	90,206	4.8
Slovenia	23,499	4.8
Spain	807,569	3.2
United Kingdom	608,952	3.8
<a href="#">EU Total</a>	6,115,465	3.9

Source: "[Eurostat press release 80/2007](#)"

**Note that natural food and organic food are NOT interchangeable terms.**

In order for a food to be labeled organic it must comply with the organic certifiers standards.

The term natural refers to how much processing a food has undergone.

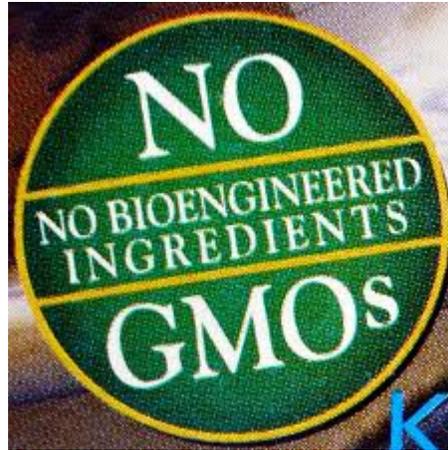
Natural food has undergone minimal processing and does not have added preservatives or other food additives.

But the term natural has nothing to do with whether that food was grown organically.

A fruit or vegetable can be grown using dangerous pesticides but if it is unprocessed, it can still be called natural.



What are GMO foods?



Label found on food packages

A GMO (genetically modified organism) is the result of a laboratory process where genes from the DNA of one species are extracted and artificially forced into the genes of an unrelated plant or animal. The foreign genes may come from bacteria, viruses, insects, animals or even humans. Because this involves the transfer of genes, GMOs are also known as "transgenic" organisms.

This process may be called either Genetic Engineering (GE) or Genetic Modification (GM); they are one and the same.

**Splicing Genes Together**

Employing genetic engineering, researchers can take certain genes from a source organism and put them into another plant or animal.

**An Example of Genetic Engineering:**

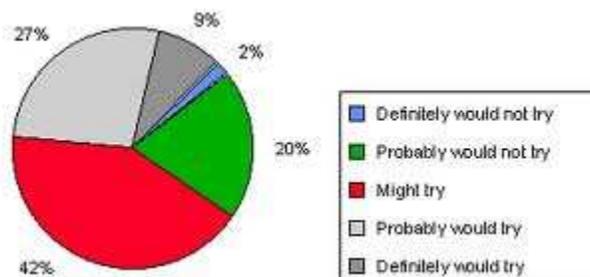
- 1** Scientists take *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a commonly occurring soil bacteria...
- 2** ...and use enzymes to remove from it the Bt gene, which produces a protein that turns toxic in the digestive tract of caterpillars.
- 3** The Bt gene is then incorporated into the chromosomes of cotton and corn, killing caterpillars that feed upon these plants.

SOURCE: North Carolina State University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

**How common are GMOs?**

First introduced into the food supply in the mid-1990s, GMOs are now present in the vast majority of processed foods in the US. While they are banned as food ingredients in Europe and elsewhere, the FDA does not even require the labeling of GMOs in food ingredient lists.

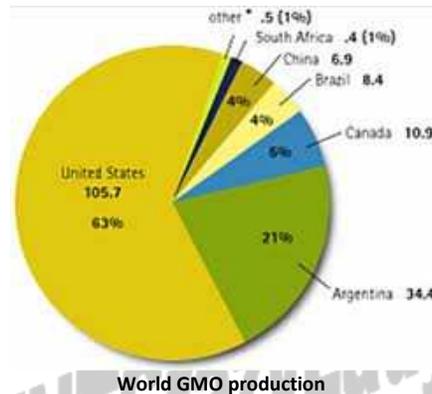
Although there have been attempts to increase nutritional benefits or productivity, the two main traits that have been added to date are herbicide tolerance and the ability of the plant to produce its own pesticide. These results have no health benefit, only economic benefit.



## Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods - Continued

According to the USDA, in 2009, 93% of soy, 93% of cotton, and 86% of corn grown in the U.S. were GMO. It is estimated that over 90% of canola grown is GMO, and there are also commercially produced GM varieties of sugar beets, squash and Hawaiian Papaya. As a result, it is estimated that GMOs are now present in more than 80% of packaged products in the average U.S. or Canadian grocery store.

Currently commercialized GM crops in the U.S. include soy (91%), cotton (88%), canola (88%), corn (85%), sugar beets (90%), Hawaiian papaya (more than 50%), zucchini and yellow squash (small amount), and tobacco (Quest® brand).



Products derived from the above, including oils from all four, soy protein, soy lecithin, cornstarch, corn syrup and high fructose corn syrup among others. There are also many "invisible ingredients," derived from GM crops that are not obviously from corn or soy.

### The Non-GMO Project

The Non-GMO Project is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder collaboration committed to preserving and building sources of non-GMO products, educating consumers, and providing verified non-GMO choices.

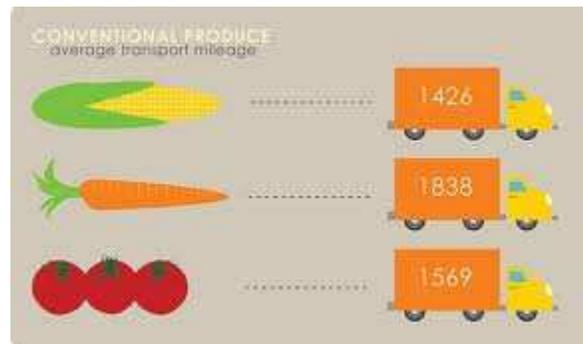
It is an initiative of the North American organic and natural product industry to create a standardized definition of non-GMO and a 3rd party verification program to assess product compliance with this Standard. The Project's Product Verification Program is entirely voluntary, and participants are companies who see the value of offering their customers a verified non-GMO choice. Many of the individuals and businesses leading the way with the Project are the same ones responsible for creating the original organic standards.



**What should we look for in terms of using the freshest food for our home food preservation?**



Ok so “in season” depends not only on where you are on the North American continent and U.S. it also depends on where you are in just about each state. Use your farmer’s markets as guide of what is “in season” in your local.



Since “local food” can have just about any meaning one wants to put to it I often shop at Farmer’s Markets. These usually have only produce that was harvested in my state, and in many cases, just my region of my state.



Let's face it the farther the produce has to travel to reach the point of sale, the less fresh it is.



When it comes to organic food, well the U.S.D.A did come up with a half decent definition by law of organic. However it does contain some loop holes that have to date, NOT been closed by any Supreme Court cases. Yet it still pays to look for the “Certified Organic” stamp.



As for Natural Foods, we are in even deeper doo-doo since the U.S. does NOT have any legal definition of this term although they do discourage companies from using the word in advertising. Of course we all know how well that is working!



Considering these factors I make a habit of asking what farm supplied what produce at the Farmer's Market. Then I research that farm. I have even been known to call or visit the farm to get an idea of how they produce and process their products.



I also look for the "No GMO" pledge stamp which is a voluntary, non-governmental pledge that farmers can join to guarantee that the produce was not started from GMO seeds (I look for this when purchasing open pollinated seeds too). This pledge was started by the Organic Consumer Association (a nonprofit consumer group) as a result of those loop holes in the 'organic' law and the lack of legal definition of 'natural'.



Here are some other tips to help you out:



**Tip #1: Buy Organic**



Certified organic products cannot intentionally include any GMO ingredients. Buy products labeled “100% organic,” “organic,” or “made with organic ingredients.” You can be doubly sure if the product also has a Non-GMO Project Verified Seal.

**Tip #2: Look for Non-GMO Project Seals**



Products that carry the Non-GMO Project Seal are independently verified to be in compliance with North America’s only third party standard for GMO avoidance, including testing of at-risk ingredients.

The Non-GMO Project is a non-profit organization committed to providing consumers with clearly labeled and independently verified non-GMO choices. Look for dairy products labeled “No rBGH or rBST,” or “artificial hormone-free.”

**Tip #3: Avoid at-risk ingredients**

If it’s not labeled organic or verified non-GMO: Avoid products made with ingredients that might be derived from GMOs. The eight GM food crops are Corn, Soybeans, Canola, Cottonseed, Sugar Beets, Hawaiian Papaya (most) and a small amount of Zucchini and Yellow Squash.

**Sugar** If a non-organic product made in North America lists “sugar” as an ingredient (and NOT pure cane sugar), then it is almost certainly a combination of sugar from both sugar cane and GM sugar beets.



**Dairy** Products may be from cows injected with GM bovine growth hormone. Look for labels stating No rBGH, rBST, or artificial hormones (Bovine Growth Hormone-rBGH/rBST).

### Tip #4: Download a Shopping Guide

There is an entire page in the following guide to help you uncover hidden GM ingredients on food labels that often read more like a chemical periodic table. **Non GMO Shopping Guide** <http://www.nongmoshoppingguide.com/Non-GMO-Shopping-Guide.pdf>

Or go for the pocket guide: **Non GMO Pocket Shopping Guide** <http://www.nongmoshoppingguide.com/144.pdf>

### How to find “In Season” foods in your area

Over the past year I have been researching this by state. I searched all the Farmer’s Markets, Local Foods and Pick Your Own sites I could find; even called a few to get specific answers. Once I had this catalogued in a spreadsheet I then went to the USDA site and researched “in season” as well as imports and exports on these same food items. Then I searched the U.S. Census site so I could how these farms were catalogued in terms of “family owned”, “LLC Family Owned”, “Corporate” or “Conglomerate” and removed any that I found. Now Family Owned and LLC Family Owned are OK; however I found one corporate owned, but run by a family (probably the former owners), farm that was removed from database.

Keep in mind that the dates listed could be for a specific region of a state and or the best Pick Your Own dates. Most of the “shorter” timeframe dates are the Pick Your Own dates.

The Farmer's Markets and Local Food sites only list what these entities have reported as being crops they usually provide and when. The Pick You Own sites only list those states and crops that registered with said sites.

There are many more fruits and vegetables grown in the U.S. via green houses or by big corporate farms that I tried my best NOT to include, however the farthest right column has the "general U.S. availability" information. Just remember that this column includes corporate farms and a few out of country imports may have slipped through.

I learned one interesting tidbit – the USDA will consider a food “in season” if it was harvested and shipped to point of sale while it was still “in season” in its place of origin. *Humm*, isn’t that splitting hairs?

The resulting database called **U.S. Fruit & Vegetable In Season & Harvest Dates State by State** can be found at: <http://weebly-file/2/2/5/0/22509786/u.s. fruit vegetable in season harvest dates state by state.xlsx>

**This workbook will give you a sense of what to expect at farmers markets and grocery stores.**

As well as what produce at grocery stores is more likely to be imported.

For instance:

- If it is not in season for your state but is in the store, it most likely came from within the US, just another state.
- If it is not listed as in season for ANY state but is in the store, it was most likely imported from Out Of Country or grown in a US corporate greenhouse farm.

### How to use the workbook

1. Check your grocery items against your states availability in the workbook.
2. If it is *not in season for your state*, then check your neighboring states for that item.
3. If it is *not in season for your neighboring states*, then check the rest of the United States.
4. If it is *not in season for the United States* then this item is either greenhouse grown or imported from out of country.

PS: Use the example tab to copy and paste your state and surrounding states column to make checking availability easier.

*Today is the Tomorrow that we worried about  
Yesterday ;}*

TNT, a fifty something, 'Homesteading' Prepper

