

What is so organic about organic milk?

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Apparently, one of the primary reasons for purchasing organic milk is the perception that it is more nutritious than conventional milk. Given the increasing interest towards organic dairy products, it is imperative to review the existing literature concerning the nutritional value of the produce, and to determine to what extent are consumer expectations met.

As per the USDA's standards, milk and milk products can be labeled "organic" if the milk is from cows that have been exclusively fed organic feed, are kept in pens with adequate space, are allowed periodic access to the outdoors and direct sunlight, are not treated with synthetic hormones and are not given certain medications to treat illness. The milk that enters such processing dairies is routinely checked for the presence of antibiotics and rarely milk containing antibiotic residue is encountered in the supply system. If the problematic supply is found, it is withheld and returned. The rampant use of pesticides in agriculture has led to the presence of pesticide residues everywhere including water and soil. This paves the way for their presence in almost all food products including the organic food products. But USDA regulations stipulate that their levels should be well within the internationally accepted limits. The taste of organic milk is same regardless of whether it is organic or regular milk and it differs from bottle to bottle and season apart from other factors. While organic dairy farmers use only organic fertilizers and organic pesticides, and their cows are not given supplemental hormones, the milk itself is identical to the milk produced conventionally. Organic milk is reported to be high in Conjugated Linoleic Acids (CLAs) and antioxidant content than conventional milk. Reports have revealed significant consumer benefits from organic milk and the possibility cannot be denied this version will hit the Indian supermarkets soon. Nevertheless, such attributes of organic milk will be discussed at full length in a review.

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