

Carol B Kenney
Natural Health and Wellness
MS, HHC AADP

pathways for health



Pathways4Heath@aol.com
www.Pathways4Health.com

September 2009...Back-to-School Lessons...

Reading Labels of Perishable Foods: Breads, Produce, and Animal Products

Recipes: Quick and Easy Harvest Soup Naturally Sweet Chocolate Banana Bread

September can feel like a hectic, scattered transition month. We say goodbye to leisure and try to harness our energy to return to the groove of work and school....a task all the more difficult this year with the late placement of the Labor Day holiday. But September also marks a time of new beginnings and fresh possibility: Gardens are ripe and overflowing with nature's harvest gifts. Many fruits and vegetables are at the peak. Farmers' markets bustle. The weather is perfect for a family outing to visit a local farmer who cares for humanely-raised cattle, sheep, pigs, and chickens. What a perfect time to learn more about where our food comes from, to find reliable sources of fresh produce and animal products, and to support local, organic farming efforts.

In the Back-to-School season, we might also think of learning some new skills. Considering food, nutrition, and health, there is much we can learn and teach our children about reading food labels to detect quality differences among foods. Interestingly, the labeling protocol for perishables...baked goods, fresh produce, and animal products...suits just about any age, as even very young children can begin to develop shopping skills.

A trip to the grocery store offers a true decoding adventure for children acquiring "labeling language" to make good nutritional choices. The very young who do not yet read can search the bread counter for twist-tags that are color-coded for freshness. And, children who are too young to read can decipher information given by the number codes on produce to see whether an item is organic or not...and whether it is genetically engineered. For the accomplished reader, it can be learning the words that indicate the nutritional quality of animal products and whether the animal was humanely raised.

The 2007 and 2008 Back-to-School issues of this newsletter explored a variety of concepts to understand information provided on packaged/processed food labels,¹ but never ventured into the world of perishables. Perishable foods like bakery goods, produce, meat, and eggs are usually found along the perimeter of supermarkets because they require care, frequent sorting and restocking, and perhaps refrigeration. When shopping, you might want to encourage children to think of wheeling the cart along the perimeter. This is the world most hospitable to fresh, whole foods. In the end, of course, it is less about decoding colors, numbers, and words...and more about developing shopping awareness and simply having *FUN* ...

"Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire."...W.B. Yeats

¹ September 2007: *Reading Food Labels for Hidden Sugars*; October 2007: *Carbohydrates and the Glycemic Index and Glycemic Load of Foods*; October 2008: *Excitotoxins and Brain Health*.



Freshness Color Cues: Bakery Goods...Bread, Rolls, Buns

For years, I have walked by the supermarket bakery counter, oblivious to the information coded by the colorful twist-ties on bakery goods. But a comment from my astute sister, who seems to know something about every topic, made me realize that the colored bread twist-tags would be a wonderful place to begin to explore food labeling of perishables since young children can recognize colors. If you are like me and did not know this, as a general rule, breads from commercial bakeries are delivered to supermarkets five times a week and are coded by colored twist ties whose color names follow the order of the alphabet.

Monday	<i>Blue</i>
Tuesday	<i>Green</i>
Thursday	<i>Red</i>
Friday	<i>White</i>
Saturday	<i>Yellow</i>

These color codes are not regulated by the government, and selected bakeries may adopt their own system, but most bakeries do adhere to this practice because it makes it easier for grocery managers to trim, sort, and restock shelves.

PLU Numerical Labels...Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

PLU stands for “price look-up.” It is a numerical system for scanning that is used on fruits and vegetables grown worldwide and sold “loose” in supermarket bins. Most PLUs for fruits and vegetables are four digits in length, signifying the type of fruit or vegetable, and that it was grown commercially (with pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, etc.).

The PLU for a gala apple, for example, is 4174, a universal code used by growers around the world. Special numbers are added at the beginning if a fruit or vegetable is *organic* or if it is *genetically modified* (a *GMO*). [See Appendix pp. 6-7 for a guide to produce most important to buy organic.]

4174	<i>a gala apple, grown with pesticides</i>
9 4174	<i>a gala apple grown organically without pesticides</i>
8 4174	<i>a gala apple that has been genetically modified</i>
4067	<i>a conventionally-grown zucchini, with pesticides</i>
9 4067	<i>a zucchini grown organically</i>
8 4067	<i>a zucchini that has been genetically modified</i>



Food Labels for Animal Products: Meat, Dairy, and Eggs

When it comes to labels for animal foods, I think of two concepts: *How humane* was the treatment of the animal, and *how healthy* is the product for us to eat? These are similar but not identical issues.

The **humane** issue...these labels are a bit confusing and “uneven” in what they signify:

Pastured: A term applied to pigs and chickens, similar to the “grass-fed” designation for beef. “Pastured” is used for pigs and chickens because neither thrives on grass alone (they require complete proteins found in grubs and grains and protein sources like whey).²

Certified Organic: This is a legally defined term that is supervised by the USDA. Animals must have some outdoor access to pasture (this concept is often a “stretch” since animals may not be aware of their outdoor access and the duration and quality of the outdoor conditions are not regulated). The term does not allow for hormones, antibiotics, and pesticides. “Organic” does not mean an animal roams freely, and animals raised organically are usually fed at least some corn, soy, and other grain.

Certified Humane: Animals have freedom of movement and adequate space, exercise, and bedding materials, but outdoor access is not required. No hormones or antibiotics are permitted.

Free-range and **Cage-Free** and **Free-Roaming:** These terms are often applied to poultry and simply mean poultry are not confined to cages. Realistically, most are raised in commercial barns in overcrowded conditions with minimal access to the outdoors.

Vegetarian Fed Chickens: A label signifying that chickens have not been fed ground chicken proteins (often recycled male chicks). It also implies a controlled diet where chickens are confined indoors and not allowed pasture grazing for grubs and other natural foraging nutrients.

United Egg Producers Certified: A “sounds-good” label created by the United Egg Producers that means little. A voluntary program, it permits overcrowding and restrictive cruel caging conditions.

Labels to Look For...With **health** in mind.

Pastured: *Animals raised outdoors often, but not necessarily, to organic standards.*

Certified Organic: See above. **Certified:** Indicates the USDA has inspected the product.

No Hormones: No hormones are allowed in the raising of pigs or poultry so this label is not allowed on packaged pork and poultry. The label is permitted on beef, with proper compliance.

No Antibiotics: A label allowed on red meat and poultry with proper documentation and compliance.

Vegetarian Fed: Refers to poultry. “Vegetarian” implies a “controlled” diet, so animals cannot have outdoor access, since they naturally forage for bugs and grubs. The diet supplements omega-3 fats.

Natural: A term is not regulated and can be used by the food industry at will. It says nothing about how the animal was fed or treated, and simply assures that the product contains no artificial or synthetic products or food colorings.

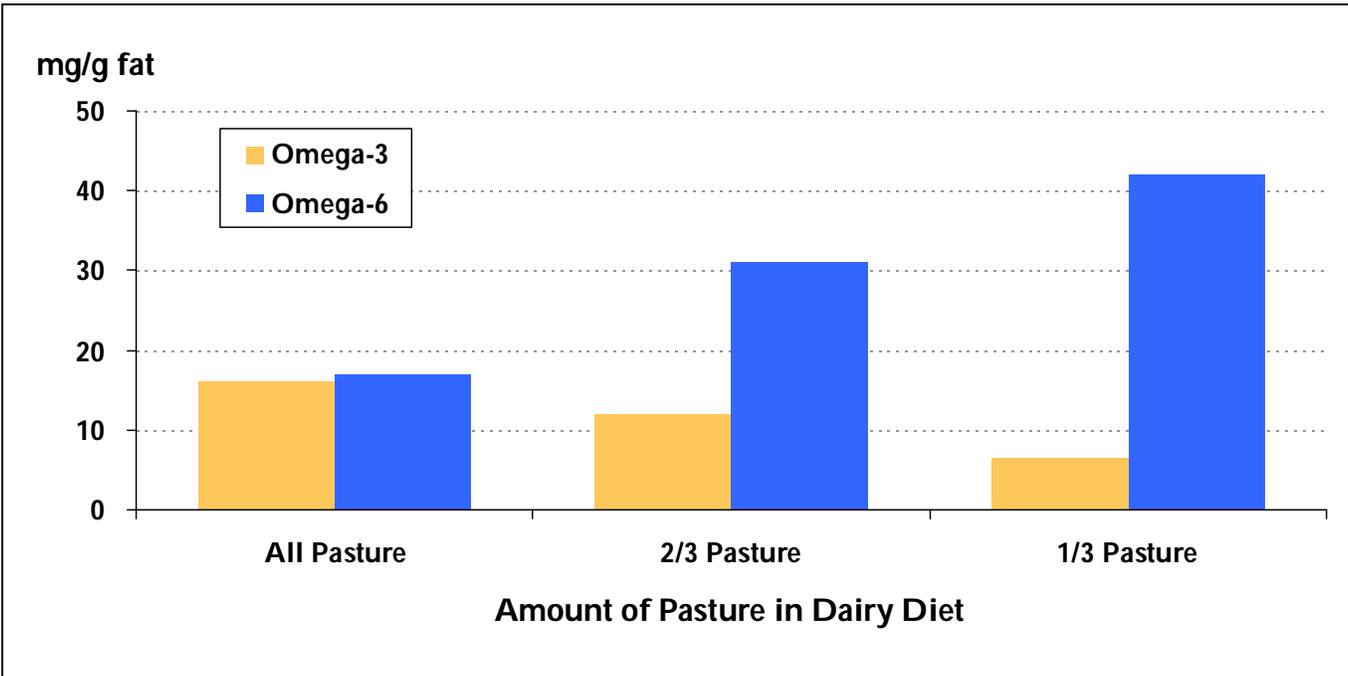
² *Pastured* does not have to mean that an animal was raised to meet organic guidelines...organic fertilizers and not antibiotics, hormones, pesticides, or GMOs.



Labels to Look For...With **humane treatment** and **health** in mind.

Grass-fed: This is a USDA-regulated term used for ruminant animals (cattle, sheep, goats, and game), but not for pigs or chickens.³ To deserve the “grass-fed” label, ruminants must eat grass and forage (hay) and must have continuous access to pasture during the growing season, spring through the fall. Unfortunately, the USDA definition of “grass-fed” allows grain to be fed and animals to be raised in confinement as long as they have “access” to pasture.⁴ Because cows thrive on grass alone, look for a label that says “100% grass-fed.” It may be hard to find since most grass-fed cows are “grain-finished.” It is good to remember that grass-fed animals are not necessarily raised without hormones and antibiotics and without the use of synthetic fertilizers for the pasturelands.

Cows that are raised organically, free to roam on rotating pasture lands,⁵ and that eat nothing but grass are the “gold standard” of red meat: Meat from grass-fed beef has about one-half to one-third as much fat, almost twice as much anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats and beta-carotene, three times the vitamin E, four times the vitamin A, and almost five times the conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a nutrient that has been helpful in reducing the risk of cancer).⁶ A dairy cow pastured on grass can produce milk that contains as much as five times the CLA as a grain-fed animal, as well as an ideal one-to-one ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 essential fatty acids.⁷



³ For pigs and chickens, look for “pastured,” since both thrive on the nutrients supplied by insects and grubs.

⁴ Marissa Guggiana, “It’s a Jungle Out There.”

⁵ Rotating pasture can cut methane production of grazing cattle by as much as 45%.

⁶ Eat Wild.com

⁷ *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods*, Michael Murphy, 579. Also the source of the chart, above.



Recipes: Easy Favorites of the Late Summer Season...

Pathways4Health Quick and Easy Harvest Soup

3 large onions, diced
5-6 medium/large zucchini, washed and sliced
3-4 large beets, scrubbed and cubed
2-3 T. each dried basil and thyme (or fresh...even better!)
Filtered water with Herbare (optional) to taste, or homemade vegetable stock.

In a large stock pot, sauté onions in coconut oil, ghee, or EV olive oil until translucent. Add remaining ingredients, covering with water and simmer for 30-45 minutes until vegetables are tender. Allow to cool. Puree with an immersion wand or in a blender or Cuisinart.

This soup is so simple. It combines well with grains, beans, and other favorites.

Chocolate Banana Bread (Naturally Sweet)

12 oz. pitted prunes
3/4 C mashed ripe bananas
2 large eggs
1C all purpose flour or whole wheat pastry flour (or 1/2 cup of each)
1/2 C unsweetened cocoa powder
2 t. EACH baking powder and cinnamon
1 1/2 t baking soda
1 C chopped walnuts (opt)
1/2 C banana chips, coarsely chopped
1 C semisweet chocolate chips (opt)

In a small saucepan bring prunes and 2 C water to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until prunes are very soft, about 20 min. Drain.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350. Lightly butter a 5 X 9 loaf pan and line bottom with a piece of parchment paper cut to fit.

In a food processor, process prunes and bananas until very smooth. Add eggs and process to combine.

In a large bowl, sift together flour, cocoa, baking powder, cinnamon, and baking soda. Stir in banana mixture until evenly moistened. Stir in nuts, banana chips, and chocolate chips. Scrape the thick batter into pan and spread evenly.

Bake bread until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out a little chocolaty but not gooey, 45-50 min.

Loosen bread from pan with a knife and invert onto a rack. Remove the parchment. Turn bread right side up and let cool at least 1 hour before slicing.

The bread freezes beautifully. You can slice it and then freeze the slices allowing you to take out as much or as little as you want. This bread appeals to young and old alike, and no one ever guesses that the secret ingredient is prunes...from my friend, Gail Jaffe.

...Forward to a Friend...

Next Month: Red Meat, Energy, and the Environment...

Appendix: Environmental Working Group's (EWG) Guide to Pesticide Load in Selected Produce...⁸

RANK	FRUIT OR VEGGIE	SCORE
1 (worst)	Peaches	100 (highest pesticide load)
2	Apples	96
3	Sweet Bell Peppers	86
4	Celery	85
5	Nectarines	84
6	Strawberries	83
7	Cherries	75
8	Lettuce	69
9	Grapes - Imported	68
10	Pears	65
11	Spinach	60
12	Potatoes	58
13	Carrots	57
14	Green Beans	55
15	Hot Peppers	53
16	Cucumbers	52
17	Raspberries	47
18	Plums	46
19	Oranges	46
20	Grapes-Domestic	46
21	Cauliflower	39
22	Tangerine	38
23	Mushrooms	37
24	Cantaloupe	34
25	Lemon	31

⁸ We published this list August08 but repeat it so you can know which fruits and vegetables are most important to buy organic. For example, I always buy organic peaches, apples, and cherries but not onions, avocados or pineapples.

RANK	FRUIT OR VEGGIE	SCORE
27	Grapefruit	31
28	Winter Squash	31
29	Tomatoes	30
30	Sweet Potatoes	30
31	Watermelon	25
32	Blueberries	24
33	Papaya	21
34	Eggplant	19
35	Broccoli	18
36	Cabbage	17
37	Bananas	16
38	Kiwi	14
39	Asparagus	11
40	Sweet Peas-Frozen	11
41	Mango	9
42	Pineapples	7
43	Sweet Corn-Frozen	2
44	Avocado	1
45 (best)	Onions	1 (lowest pesticide load)

Note: We ranked a total of 44 different fruits and vegetables but grapes are listed twice because we looked at both domestic and imported samples.

How This Guide Was Developed

The produce ranking was developed by analysts at the not-for-profit Environmental Working Group (EWG) based on the results of nearly 43,000 tests for pesticides on produce collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration between 2000 and 2005. A detailed description of the [criteria used in developing the rankings](#) is available as well as a full list of fresh fruits and vegetables that have been tested.