

## Spring 2006

I like real food, no question about it. It fills all the senses, it's healthy and I know what it's made of. When I pick up a certified Organic vegetable, I know there is a guarantee of its origin, of what it took to grow it and a complete traceability, from the soil it grew in and the farmer that tilled it, to the trucker that shipped it. I also know what isn't in the vegetable. I know there isn't any pesticide or herbicide residue, there is no wax preservative, there is no synthetic chemical fertilizer and there aren't any GMO's.

GMO's, or genetically modified organisms, are the newest thing in the biotechnical world. Using genetic material from different species scientists are inserting their genes into food crops for herbicide resistance or to make the plant act like a pesticide. Theoretically either or both of these together will increase yields. There is ample documentation on the advantages of GMOs and the possible side effects and good science is great, but the results are still out on whether or not this really is good science.

What is more important however, is being able to have the choice, as is our right, to know if what we eat contains these genetically engineered organisms. Unlike most of Europe and other countries around the world, the labelling of foods in North America does not have to tell us if the food contains GMO's. It is purely a voluntary consideration by food producers to include it on the label and guess what? No one is volunteering. If these novel foods are so good and without harm, you'd think you'd see isles of foods in the grocery store promoting GMO food. Organic food does that, why not GMO laced food?

Food activists like Greenpeace state there hasn't been any long term testing done on foods containing GMOs and Health Canada says that if it looks like a tomato and tastes like a tomato it is a tomato, even if it contains genes from a flounder. They call it substantial equivalence. The consumer is the long term test. It's scary to think that the people we've elected to govern this country and protect us haven't informed us of any of the health benefits of including foreign bacterial and viral genes in our food. Google GMOs and discover for yourself what they are and make your own choice on how to handle them.

A good way to avoid GMO's here in the Yukon is to buy local. Farmers here in the Yukon aren't growing any of these crops yet. Buy your vegetables, grains and processed food from someone who lives and farms here. Ask them what they use and how they care for their garden. Find out what they feed their livestock. Buy in season vegetables and you will not have to worry over preservatives. Visit the farm and look for what you would want to see in a garden. If you can't make it to the farm or when it's winter, go to the stores and look for the expanding Organic section, it's guaranteed. If you don't enjoy the crowd at the big stores you can always choose to visit Riverside or Creekside Grocery stores. They have a tremendous selection of Organic food and when it's available they support local producers. 3Beans is a store full of Organic items and knowledgeable staff. Alpine Bakery has an organic food cooperative that operates year round besides the bakery and again, local producers supply them.

Talk to the producer and know what you're eating. Look for the label and see what you're eating. As a consumer you have a right to know and if it's not on the label voice your opinion.

Talk to me about real food – Tom Rudge