

Understanding Food Packaging and Marketing Claims

Do You Know What You're Eating?

"Non-GMO" or "GMO-Free"

- Used by the food industry to advertise that a food is free from genetically modified organisms. This is a VOLUNTARY label

"Local"

- Produced and processed within a particular area (e.g. within an undefined # of miles, commonly considered to be less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the State in which it is produced)



"Natural"

- Generally means that a product has nothing artificial or synthetic added to it

"Fresh"

- Food is unprocessed and has not been frozen or subjected to any form of thermal processing or any other form of preservation
- NOTE: This definition still allows for wax coatings, post harvest use of approved pesticides, application of mild chlorine wash, and treatment with ionizing radiation

*Terms in **RED** do NOT have a formal definition right now...Stay tuned!



"Made with Organic _____"

- Used when a product contains at least 70% organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)

"Organic"

- any product that contains a minimum of 95% organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)

"100% Organic"

- Any product that contains 100% organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)

"USDA Certified Organic"

- Grown and processed using strict guidelines
- NO genetically modified organisms
- Produce: no synthetic fertilizers/pesticides
- Meat: animals raised in living conditions that reflect their natural behavior, fed 100% organic feed and forage, and not given antibiotics or hormones
- Packaged foods: no artificial preservatives, colors, or flavors; ingredients are organic with a few exceptions (ex: baking soda, pectin, etc.)

Grain Terms

"Whole Grains"

- Whole grains contain the bran, germ, and endosperm (examples of whole grains: brown rice, oatmeal, corn)

Egg and Chicken Terms



"100% or All-Natural"

- Only means nothing was added to the egg (coloring, flavoring)
- Does NOT indicate how the chicken was raised

"USDA Organic"

- Certified organic eggs are from uncaged hens that have free range of their houses and access to outdoor spaces. They are also fed an organic diet

"Vitamin Enhanced"

- Hens are given a special diet that helps them produce eggs with a higher vitamin content (e.g. Vitamin E)

"Omega-3 Enriched"

- Hens are fed a diet that includes flaxseed, algae or fish oils to increase the Omega-3 fatty acid content of the eggs

"No Antibiotics"

- Hens are raised without any antibiotics of any type

"No added Hormones"

- NO eggs have added hormones (regardless of what the package says) because the use of hormones is NOT allowed in hog or poultry production
- If you see "No added hormones" on a package, it must be followed by the statement: "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones"

"Free-range"

- Hens are cage free with continuous access to the outdoors during their laying cycle

"Cage-free"

- Hens are raised in an enclosed structure with unlimited access to food and water. They are NOT required to have access to the outdoors



"No rBST (or rBGH)"

- rBST and rBGH are growth hormones that are given to cows to increase milk production

"Ultrasteurized (UHT)" Milk

- Milk has been heated to at least 280 degrees F for 2 seconds. This increases shelf life, but may cause a "cooked" flavor

"USDA Organic"

- Cows have year round access to outdoors/pasture. No hormones are used. Cows are fed an organic diet (grains, forage)

"Grass-fed Beef"

- 100% Grass Fed means an animal is fed forage 100% (no grain crops) after being weaned from their mother's milk



Milk and Beef Terms