Study: Organic not necessarily a healthier option

By Elizabeth Weise, USA Today

Organic products have no significant nutritional advantage over conventional foods, even though consumers can pay more for them, a new study finds.

The findings suggest that a key reason behind why many people buy organic products — a $28.6 billion market last year — may not be borne out by the science.

The four-year project began when two doctors wondered what advice they should give their families and patients about whether to buy organic or conventional foods.

“It became much larger than we expected,” says Crystal Smith-Spangler, a primary care doctor at Stanford University and lead author on the study appearing Tuesday in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine.

Eventually, 12 researchers looked at 240 studies conducted from 1966 to 2011 covering nutrient and contaminant levels in foods.

Among the findings:

•There were no significant differences in the vitamin content of organic and conventional fruits and vegetables. The studies looked specifically at vitamins A, C and E.

•Detectable pesticide residue was found in 7 percent of organic produce and 38 percent of conventional produce. However, only three studies found pesticide residue that exceeded maximum allowed limits in the European Union on

organic or conventional produce.

Read the whole story

Win tickets to the Signature Cocktail Contest

Lake Tahoe News is giving away two tickets to Barton Foundation's Signature Cocktail Contest.

The Sept. 13 event is from 5:30-8pm at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe. Ten bartenders will compete for the best drink of the night as a fundraiser for Barton Health Foundation.



A libation from the 2011 event.
Photo/LTN file

If you don't win, tickets are $25 each in advance or $30 at the door.

Participating bars-restaurants are Cantina, Edgewood, Embassy, Heavenly, Lakeside, LewMarNels, Naked Fish, Riva, MontBleu, Fox & Hound.

To win the tickets, you must either submit a recipe (via a

comment) using vodka or tell us about your favorite vodka drink. The other criterion is that you must be part of *Lake Tahoe News'* special NEWS team. To be a team member, fill out the paid subscriber form. The winner must be willing to have their full name published. Winners will be announced the week of the event.

White House releases presidential beer recipe

By Amy Gardner, Washington Post

President Obama continued to foment interest in his beer-drinking ways Saturday by releasing the recipes for two White House home brews along with a video on how the beer is made.

The video shows White House assistant chef Sam Kass and sous chef Tafari Campbell making the beer, dumping hops and honey into a pot of boiling brown liquid, checking on five-gallon bottles in a tiny basement storage room, transferring it to bottles and finally, tasting it (and approving).

"Brewing beer is becoming a thing that Americans are doing in their homes and garages across the country," Kass said in the video. "The president certainly thought it would be a good idea to see if we could join in that time-honored tradition and brew some of our own beer."

Obama has been mentioning his love of beer regularly on the campaign trail in recent weeks, talking about how much he enjoys drinking a cold one at the end of a long day and even sharing a White House-made beer from his campaign bus with a man he met in Iowa last month. Although there's no evidence

that Obama is faking his love of beer, his regular willingness to pose with it is serving a political purpose: helping him appear to be an everyman who drinks a beverage favored by millions of Americans. And you can even serve the White House beer in a Vice President Joe Biden can holder.

Read the whole story

Bread & Broth cooks meet weekly need to feed 100+

By Kathryn Reed

Looking at what little is left on plates and the fact many want seconds indicates two things – the food is good and the people are hungry.

Each Monday a cadre of volunteers puts together a nutritious, well-balanced meal for more than a 100 people. It's free – free to eat – not free to produce. Bread & Broth has no requirements when it comes to who dines. It's called a community meal.



Wendy David chops up melons for the Bread & Broth meal. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Wendy David has been one of the cooks since the program started in 1989. The disadvantage she and other cooks have compared to restaurants is not being able to order what they want. Unlike restaurant chefs, they have to scramble and be creative with whatever is in the pantry and refrigerator or freezer.

It’s a bit like “Chopped” on the Food Network where you don’t know what is in the box, but you have a limited amount of time to create something edible from the mystery ingredients.

The judges in this case are the diners. Their thank yous and smiles are the reward for all the volunteers associated with Bread & Broth.

“We are always able to put something together. It may not be A-plus, but it’s always B-plus,” David said of the quality of meals. “My theory is if I didn’t want to eat it at home, why would I serve it to someone else?”



Linda Malzone has been volunteering at B&B for six years.

The head cooks for each Monday come in the Friday before to see what fresh food has been donated. Then they look in the freezer to see what should be pulled out to thaw.

For David’s August meal a ton of summer squash was in the fridge so she came up with a pasta primavera. It meant cutting squash from 12:30-2:30pm that day.

Recipes aren’t possible because all the ingredients aren’t likely to be on hand. David, like most of the cooks, doesn’t have a culinary background. Her experience comes from raising four children and having a love for being in the kitchen.

Usually four cooks are assigned to each Monday, with other volunteers helping with setup, serving, cleanup, drinks, assembling take-home bags and whatever else is asked of them.

Claire Neville works alongside David in the kitchen. She believes it’s important not to have stress in the kitchen, and to embrace the team approach.

“If we feed everyone and no one leaves hungry, we have accomplished our task,” Neville said.

John Mauriello started as a sub for Bread & Broth and now works the first and fifth Mondays. He will do whatever is asked of him, but cooking is what he likes best.

Linda Malzone is cutting fresh melons on this particular Monday. She’s been volunteering at Bread & Broth for the last six years. She told her husband, Earl Scilingo, how rewarding and fun it is. He’s been working there for the last two years.



Nora Jones is happy to do anything but cook.

The cooks arrive at 12:30pm, the rest of the volunteers at 3pm, and diners at 4pm. Food is served until 5:30pm at Grace Hall at St. Theresa Church (1401 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe). Cleanup is done by 6pm.

Usually it's Nora Jones, coordinator for the first Monday, who stays until every pot and pan is put in its place.

"Some of the patrons I've seen for 17 years. I just love them," Jones said. "There are a lot of dedicated people," she says of the volunteers.

In the past 23 years, the need for Bread & Broth has remained strong. The number of people coming this summer parallels that of 2011.

It is through donations that Bread & Broth is able to keep serving the weekly meals. Donations come in the form of money and food.

For $250 people or companies may sponsor an Adopt-a-Day for $250. This feeds more than 100 people. Then the company can bring up to five people to volunteer on that particular day. Tonight, *Lake Tahoe News* is sponsoring the Adopt-a-Day.

For more information about getting involved with Bread & Broth or to donate, contact Carol Gerard at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Farm to table dinner on North Shore

With the mountains as the backdrop and the creek nearby, join PlumpJack Café and two local farmers for a memorable farm-to-table outdoor dining experience.

Executive chef Ben “Wyatt” Dufrensne teams up with Gary Romano of Sierra Valley Farms to hand-select and prepare the freshest ingredients for a multi-course meal paired PlumpJack’s favorite summer wines.

The Sept. 13 7pm dinners are $85 per person. Space is limited and reservations must be made seven days in advance – (530) 583.1578.

World may be forced to stop eating meat

By Dylan Stableford, Yahoo News

By the year 2050, you may be forced to become a vegetarian. That is, if Sweden's water scientists are to be believed.

According to the Stockholm International Water Institute, "There will not be enough water available on current croplands to produce food for the expected 9 billion population in 2050 if we follow current trends and changes towards diets common in Western nations."

Humans now derive about 20 percent of their daily protein intake from animal-based products, reports London's Guardian. But a new report published by the institute says the world's population will have to cut that figure to 5 percent by 2050 to accommodate the planet's "considerable regional water deficits."

Why not just produce more food?

"Nine hundred million people already go hungry and 2 billion people are malnourished in spite of the fact that per capita food production continues to increase," the report said. "With 70 percent of all available water being in agriculture, growing more food to feed an additional 2 billion people by 2050 will place greater pressure on available water and land."

So vegetarianism, the scientists say, is one option to combat the water shortage.

"A move towards vegetarian diets could help free up large portions of arable land to human food production," Orion Jones wrote on BigThink.com. "A third of current farmland is used to grow crops that feed animals. Additionally 'animal protein-

rich food consumes five to 10 times more water than a vegetarian diet.'"

The report was released for the start of "Water Week" and the annual world water conference in Stockholm. And while the forecast may sound dire, the world's water situation is already grave.

According to the World Water Council, 1.1 billion people now live without clean drinking water.

And the United States is experiencing its worst drought in a generation, punishing farmers and burning up the nation's corn crop. On July 31, nearly 65 percent of the nation was experiencing drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

The drought's been so severe and water levels so low, Midwestern towns that were intentionally submerged decades ago are starting to surface.

A hefeweizen before noon may help with digestion

By Eric Asimov, New York Times

In the heat of a waning summer, when half the world seems to have taken off on vacation, a late-morning glass of wheat beer can be another sort of pleasurable departure. In Bavaria, home of the hefeweizen style of wheat beer, such refreshment is an essential component of the brotzeit, or second breakfast.

The brotzeit may consist of a little cheese and bread, or even better, a fresh pretzel; perhaps veal sausage; some long white radishes; and a hefeweizen.

In German, hefeweizen means yeast wheat, so called because the beer is traditionally unfiltered, leaving particles of yeast sediment to turn the golden beer cloudy and turbid. It may be this suggestion of solidity that leads Germans to occasionally refer to hefeweizen as bottled bread.

Americans might look askance at a pre-noon glass of beer, but hefeweizen is light, crisp, fairly low in alcohol, undeniably refreshing and, the Germans believe, good for digestion.

No matter what time of day, however, the hefeweizen style has become popular with American consumers, whose own contribution to the tradition has been to serve the beer with a wedge of lemon on the rim of the glass, dipping into what ought to be a foamy, crenelated head.

American brewers, too, are drawn to hefeweizen, which is but one distinctive style among many German wheat beers. Kristalweizen is similar to hefeweizen, except it has been filtered, so it is crystal clear. Berliner weisse is pleasingly tart and sour; dunkelweizen is a darker version of hefeweizen; weizenbock is darker and more powerful.

Read the whole story

Salt debate spills into restaurant sector

By Douglas Guengua, New York Times

It was a slightly curious gesture: last week, Boston Market, the national chain of rotisserie chicken restaurants, removed the salt shakers from its tables, replacing them with small placards — tucked next to the pepper shakers — promoting the company's interest in reducing sodium.

As a marketing strategy, it was clever, earning the 476-restaurant franchise business more publicity than its popular macaroni and cheese ever could. As a health measure, however, it was unlikely to do more than to make customers shrug and to fire up the longstanding debate over whether people who do not have high blood pressure truly need to limit their salt intake.

"We are removing the temptation to put salt on food right away without even tasting it," said George Michel, chief executive of Boston Market, in a telephone interview. "As part of our social responsibility and promise to deliver wholesome food, we wanted to take a bold step like this."

Sodium reduction has lately become a culinary cause célèbre. Subway, Olive Garden, Red Lobster, Burger King and Taco Bell, as well as food manufacturers like Campbell Soup and PepsiCo, have all publicly vowed to produce lower-sodium products. (To a degree: last year, Campbell decided to add sodium back into some of its soups after sales began to slide.)

Critics say the precautions are getting ahead of the science. Unlike tobacco, alcohol and other long-corroborated health risks, sodium remains a topic of sometimes angry debate among researchers. There is no evidence that average people — those without hypertension — need less sodium, critics say, and too little of the essential nutrient could be as dangerous as too much.

"The science does not support an effort to reduce sodium in people who eat around three and a half grams of sodium a day, and that's most Americans," said Michael H. Alderman, editor

of the American Journal of Hypertension. “Yet here we are doing silly things that are P.R. Salt shakers only account for about 10 percent of your salt intake. I don’t think it’s ethically justified.”

On the other side are public health advocates – most notably the United States Department of Agriculture, with a strong assist from Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s administration in New York.

“There is conclusive evidence that high-salt diets lead to hypertension,” said Michael F. Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest and a leading antisalt flag bearer, “and there is conclusive evidence that hypertension increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes.”

Read the whole story

Youths switching from full sugar drinks to diet

By Allison Aubrey, NPR

Diet soda, once the soft drink of choice for adults watching their calories, isn’t just for grown ups anymore. Increasingly, kids are getting their fix, too.

In fact, consumption of diet drinks has doubled among U.S. children over a decade. About 1 in 4 of adults drink low-calorie or no-calorie sweetened drinks and foods. And for children: Six percent were consuming diet drinks in 1999-2000. This increased to 12.5 percent in 2007-08. The findings were recently published in the American Journal of Clinical

Nutrition.

So, if parents are helping kids cut calories and sugar by offering diet drinks, is this good for kids' health?

"This is the $64,000 question," researcher Barry Popkin tells the Salt. Popkin is the author of "The World is Fat: The Fads, Trends, Policies,and Products That Are Fattening the Human Race", and a professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

On one hand, there's some evidence that replacing soda and juices with calorie-free beverages can help teenagers control their weight. There's also a study that found diet soda drinkers were less likely to develop metabolic syndrome, as long as they were eating a prudent diet.

But on the other hand? Popkin says some people seem to use diet sodas to rationalize a very unhealthy diet – the "I'll have a Diet Coke With That Big Mac" crowd.

Read the whole story

Healthy food does not have to be expensive

By Huffington Post

It's tough to eat healthy, and even tougher to find healthy foods on a budget. Even though eating well is an investment in your long-term health, it can be hard to find nutrient-dense, environmentally friendly foods that don't hit your wallet.

Environmental Working Group, a non-profit research

organization, has examined over 1,000 foods to determine the ones that have the fewest pesticides, contaminants and artificial ingredients … and are reasonably priced. Their printable booklet “Good Food on a Tight Budget” offers tips for healthy, inexpensive foods.

They recommend making a meal plan, cooking at home, skipping processed foods, growing your own vegetables, and swapping beans and lentils for meat. Making the swap isn’t just good for your health.

According to a previous report by the group, if every American cut meat and cheese from their diet for one day per week, it would equal removing 7.6 million cars from the road.

Read the whole story