

GAPS™ FOOD QUALITY GUIDE

Good, Better, Best

On GAPS, the majority of the foods you will be eating are whole, raw, unpackaged and unprocessed foods from the perimeter of the grocery store. Fresh produce, meats, seafood, eggs, and dairy are the main components of the diet. Food quality is an important consideration as well, and labels can be confusing.

Use this guide to help you decipher which options are the best for your healing, while still fitting into your budget. Local sources are preferable whenever possible. Knowing your farmer and their methods gives you peace of mind and a sense of community. Local food is usually fresher and therefore more nutritious.

MEATS, ORGANS, BONES



BEEF, LAMB, ELK, AND BISON

1. Best- 100% grass-fed and finished
2. Better- grass-fed, pasture-raised
3. Good- organic
4. Okay- hormone and antibiotic-free

PORK AND POULTRY

1. Best- pasture-raised, humanely-raised
2. Better- free-range, organic
3. Good- organic
4. Okay- hormone and antibiotic-free

PRODUCE, HERBS, SPICES



1. Best- local, organic
2. Better- organic
3. Good- organic unless on EWG's Clean 15
4. Okay- conventional, non-GMO, non-irradiated
5. Salt- buy unrefined salt with no additives, see 'Sources'

EGGS AND DAIRY



EGGS

1. Best- local, pasture-raised
2. Better- pasture-raised commercial
3. Good- organic, free-range or cage-free
4. Okay- commercial

DAIRY*

1. Best- grass-fed, raw
2. Better- grass-fed, pasteurized
3. Good- organic, pasteurized
4. Okay- pasteurized, hormone and antibiotic-free

SEAFOOD



1. Best- wild from sustainable fisheries, see 'Sources'
2. Better- wild-caught
3. Good- humanely harvested, non-grain fed
4. Avoid- farm-raised

*Always buy full-fat dairy products. Avoid ultra-pasteurized dairy products.

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NUTS AND SEEDS



1. Best- local, organic, refrigerated
2. Better- local, organic
3. Good- organic
4. Okay- conventional
5. Properly prepare nuts and seeds by soaking them in salt water for 7 hours. Then strain, rinse, and dehydrate at no more than 150 degrees F until crisp. Store in the fridge or freezer. Proper storage and preparation makes them more digestible and preserves the nutrition.

FATS AND OILS



ANIMAL FATS

See meats and dairy for guidelines on the best quality poultry schmaltz, tallows, lard, and butter or ghee.

NUT AND SEED OILS

1. Best- organic, cold pressed, extra-virgin
2. Better- cold pressed, extra-virgin
3. Avoid- conventional, non-cold pressed
4. Buy and keep oils in a tinted glass jar when possible and store in a cool, dark place.

Labels Deciphered

ORGANIC

- All certified organic producers are verified by a USDA certified agent.
- Plant products: use of synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering are prohibited. Only substances approved for organic production may be used.
- Animal products: only certified organic feed must be used. Ruminants must have access to pasture for the season (at least 120 days/yr), and receive at least 30% of their feed from pasture. All animals must have access to the outdoors year-round. They are not given hormones or antibiotics.

HUMANE

Certified humanely raised animals meet minimum requirements for wholesome food, conscientious care, appropriate environment, and considerate handling, transport and slaughter. The actual requirements vary by animal and operations are inspected before they can apply the label.

PASTURE-RAISED

This means animals have access to the outdoors where they can forage, which means more nutritious eggs, dairy, and meat, and happier animals. There is no certification for this statement, so buy from reputable sources.

GRASS-FED

This label is regulated but not strictly enforced by the USDA, i.e., there is no in-person inspection of the farm. All cows eat grass for the first 6-12 months, after that, most are 'grain-finished.' Look for labels that say '100% grass-fed' or meat that is certified by the American Grassfed Association (AGA) or the Food Alliance. Better yet, source from a local farm that sells 100% grass-fed meat.

Labels Deciphered, cont.

NATURAL, MINIMALLY PROCESSED

The USDA allows this label if a product "contains no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed. Minimal processing means that the product was processed in a manner that does not fundamentally alter the product." It means little for cuts of meat, since most meet these criteria. It does not mean anything about the food the animal ate or the conditions it was raised in.

NO ADDED HORMONES/ANTIBIOTICS

Hormones are not permitted in raising hogs or poultry, so this label is only relevant for other animals. These labels are allowed to be used by the USDA if sufficient documentation is provided. You do want to avoid meat raised using hormones or antibiotics, so if you aren't buying local or organic, these labels are better than nothing!

FREE-RANGE OR FREE-ROAMING

The USDA allows this on poultry meat products if producers demonstrate that it has had access to the outdoors. Unfortunately this can still be used even if the chickens were in cramped spaces that had a small door open to the outside for just a few minutes a day, so it doesn't mean much.

CAGE-FREE

Similar to 'free-range', 'cage-free' is used for eggs rather than meat but can be used for eggs laid by hens confined to a crowded warehouse but not given any access to the outdoors. As per the USDA "consumer packages labeled as cage free must be produced by hens housed in a building, room, or enclosed area that allows for unlimited access to food, water, and provides the freedom to roam within the area during the laying cycle."

PRODUCE SKUs

Starts with 9 = organic

Starts with 3 or 4 = conventional

Starts with 8 = genetically modified or irradiated- avoid. Keep in mind producers aren't required to use the '8' label so your best bet to avoid those is to buy organic.

THE BOTTOM LINE ON LABELS

Labels can be misleading, and there have even been multiple cases of fraud in organic labeling. That's why buying from a farm you know and trust is always your best bet. When that isn't an option, buying organic is still much better than conventional. Look for these generally trustworthy seals:



References

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/OrganicProductionandHandlingStandards.pdf>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/meat-and-poultry-labeling-terms/meat-and-poultry-labeling-terms>

"Practical Paleo: A Customized Approach to Health and a Whole Foods Lifestyle" by Diane SanFilippo

<https://www.consumerreports.org/food-labels/seals-and-claims>

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/USDA%20Grademarked%20Product%20Label%20Submission%20Checklist.pdf>

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Sources and Resources for High Quality Foods

MEATS, ORGANS, BONES, AND FATS

- The Butcher Box
- US Wellness Meats
- Fatworks
- Miller's Organic Farm
- Eat Wild
- HealthyTraditions

MEAT STOCKS AND BONE BROTHS

- Wise Choice Market
- Selena's Naturally
- US Wellness Meats
- Miller's Organic Farm
- The Brothery
- Thrive Market
- Bare Bones
- Osso Good Co.
- Kettle & Fire

PREPARED FERMENTS

- Wise Choice Market
- Fab Ferments
- Real Pickles
- Bubbies
- Oregon Brineworks

EGGS AND DAIRY

- Miller's Organic Farm
- Healthy Traditions
- Pure Indian Foods or Fourth and Heart (Ghee)
- Cornucopia's guide to egg quality
- Real Milk (raw milk sources)
- White Mountain (24-hr ferment yogurt)
- Your neighbor or friend's backyard eggs are better than store bought as long as the feed is non-GMO.

SEAFOOD

- The Butcher Box
- Vital Choice
- Same Day Seafood
- Monterey Bay Aquarium Sustainable Seafood Guide

PRODUCE

- Your local farmer's market or garden
- Miller's Organic Farm
- Farmbox Direct

SALT

- Baja Gold Sea Salt
- Redmond's Real Salt
- Himalayan Pink Salt
- Celtic Sea Salt
- Nature's Cargo (Canada)
- Maine Sea Salt
- Mountain Rose Herbs

HERBS, TEA, AND SPICES

- Mountain Rose Herbs
- Frontier Co-op
- Traditional Medicinals
- Pique Herbal Teas

NUTS AND SEEDS

- Nuts.com
- Blue Mountain Organics
- Radiant Life

GENERAL

- Your local Weston Price chapter
- Eat Wild