



What price are you really paying for ‘convenient food’?

“The average, non-organic apple is sprayed with up to 16 pesticides over 30 times, according to international research,” says Rachel Jesson, who co-authored the book *Wholesome Nutrition for You*, with her partner at The Nutritional Institute, Ian Craig.

That’s a lot of chemicals on one, small fruit. Yet, it’s hidden from consumers because farmers and retail outlets do not have to label fresh produce. (a fact that the average person doesn’t know), says Jesson. Another stark reality is that due to the amount of hormones pumped into livestock that enters our non-organic meats, eggs and dairy indicate there is now a definite trend that (have been cases of) young girls are menstruating (beginning to menstruate much) earlier than ever before.

But to the average person, the term ‘organic’ is simply seen as some unnecessary label, one that makes you fork out a little extra of your hard earned cash, when as Jesson points out, what you’re really paying for, is the knowledge that what you’re putting in your body has grown without any potentially hazardous chemicals that could alter the state of your cells and put you at risk for disease.

Yet mention the word bread or carb to a lot of people and the horror is real. “We need to get some priorities straight,” says Craig, “which is why we decided to write *Wholesome Nutrition*, and the fact is good, wholesome food that is as close to its natural state and free of chemicals will keep us healthy for longer.”

Studies have shown that many cancers are lifestyle related – and food is a big part of that. Making sure we access the healthiest, most nutritious food we can source, could reduce this risk significantly.

This is one of the reasons they decided to write the book. The two say that it came as a result of their frustration over trendy and extreme diets that dominate popular literature today. Many of which, they note, have a vested interest in the food industry and promote singular theories, while ignoring the science that shows that in fact, no singular approach works for everyone. So many factors come into play, including age, gender, ethnicity, and activity levels, that creating a diet that has a one-size-fits-all approach is not only impossible, but in many ways can set you up for failure and promote bad health.

Cutting out food groups is not the answer. “What we need to do is look at the nutritional value of food and not see something as simply a ‘carb’. Most foods aren’t simply one or another, take legumes – they are rich in protein, carbohydrates, and fibre – a great food that can keep some people fuller, and healthier,” says Craig.

Which is why they decided to write a guide to sort it out, provide advice, while shedding light on how food is made and the cost we may be paying when we ignore when we don’t know.

They note that you don’t need to have a self-sustaining farm to eat healthily or that you should order your food from specialty shops. There are ways to test fruit and vegetables to see how healthy they are and the book goes into more detail about things like a refractometer that measures the nutrient density of fruit and vegetables.

“We just want people to be aware that fresh produce (dietary labels) by law does not need to tell you that an apple has been covered in preserving wax to stay fresher for longer, for instance.”

In speaking up, they note, it's not their intention to point fingers but rather, simply to make people aware of the processes around food so that they can make up their own minds.

As busy professionals, they note that their mission is to provide sound, sensible tips on how to source wholesome and nutritious food from the shops that we frequent anyway.

Even so, supplementing what you buy with stuff you grow is a step they do encourage. "Growing your own vegetables can be a fun and safe way to dramatically change the health of your family for the better," notes Jesson. "Even in a small apartment you can grow an astonishing array of produce on a balcony, all you need are a few pots, it can be quite therapeutic in its own way."

Is their guide an attack on some of the more popular diets out there such as banting or paleo? "No," says Craig. "In fact, if you are following those types of plans you could use this as more information. We're not trying to say that people do only this or only that, but the opposite. It's time to separate the hype, to take a real look at food, not a source for simply thinner thighs, but a longer, and healthier life."

Patrick Holford, who wrote the foreword, agrees and says that it's a book that may help to separate fact from fiction. But more than that, getting the message out that it's not simply what you eat that matters, but how you eat that makes the difference.

"And that, ultimately is the message we tried to convey," concludes Jesson. "You're in charge of your health, but in today's modern world of convenience, isn't it about time that we took a step back and questioned just what we are putting in our bodies for the sake of it?"

Wholesome Nutrition for You, by Ian Craig and Rachel Jesson is available from bookstores now.

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