

exposure to pesticides, and without knowing it, moved me toward whole foods. My new-found *health consciousness* prompted me to buy grass and vegetarian fed livestock and poultry—pushing me into the world of “whole” or real foods even more. In fact, Whole Foods is my favorite grocery store.

My history with food and its ingredients over the past nineteen years has led me to the conclusion that real or whole food is not produced in a factory containing ingredients created in a laboratory; “real food” is *what comes from nature*. But one must be careful even with foods from nature as the food industry, supported by the government and marketing departments, has turned real food into a confusing commodity.

The August 2013 edition of *Consumer Reports* features an article on food labels identifying those that are useful in describing the content of food and others that are not. The label “USDA Organic” is a good label, as it certifies that the product’s ingredients are at least 95% organic; in addition, no synthetic fertilizers or pesticides are used in their production. This “organic” labeling also applies to meat products and indicates that they are free from antibiotics, growth hormones, and genetically modified feeds (“Food Labels to look for (or ignore)” 12).

Two other good labels are, first, the “Animal Welfare Approved” (AWA) label, which ensures that animals reared for eggs, dairy, or meat products received humane treatment from birth to death, including access to pasture lands. Of note is that only cooperatives and family farms can receive the AWA label of approval. The second is the “American Grass-Fed” label, which provides USDA certification that the meat is from an animal that spent 99% of its lifetime with access to pasture lands (“Food Labels to look for (or ignore)” 12).

When you see the labels “Free-Range” and “Natural,” buyer beware. “Free-Range” (used for poultry only) signifies that the animal had access to open air each day, but the amount of time

spent in the open air is not specified and five minutes is considered acceptable. “Natural,” on the other hand, has no standard definition when used, especially with snack foods. Food producers can use it at will, even in products that contain high-fructose corn syrup and those with genetically modified ingredients (“Food Labels to look for (or ignore)” 12).

I spoke with Amber Kastler, a licensed dietitian with Hy-Vee food stores in Fort Dodge, Iowa, to gain her opinion on whole or real foods. Kastler specializes in sports nutrition, diabetes, weight management, and food allergies. We discussed food and its relationship to what are called *Western* diseases, e.g., obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Her belief is that there is a direct correlation between diets high in processed foods and those *Western* diseases. Her advice is to avoid what she refers to as the SAD diet (Standard American Diet), which are diets high in saturated fats, processed foods, and meats (Kastler).

Kastler suggests that the best way to lose weight and reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes is to shop the periphery of the grocery store—seeking fruits, vegetables, whole grain pastas, and whole grain breads. These foods are less likely to contain chemical additives, added sugars (in various forms), and salt. In fact, she counsels her clients that whenever possible they should buy certified organic foods. And if one cannot afford to buy 100% organic, at least consider substituting those foods on the “Dirty Dozen” list with organic versions (Kastler).

The “Dirty Dozen” is a list of fruits and vegetables with the highest levels of pesticides detected during scientific analysis. The list is compiled and published by a non-profit advocacy group called the Environmental Working Group (EWG). The EWG produces this list to educate consumers as to which fruits and vegetables should be sourced from organic growers and which are okay to buy from non-organic sources (McCaffrey).

starving country, and that's a good thing. It's also good for the bottom line and for the

Writing Record-Research Essay

July 7, 2013

July 9, 2013

It's 5:30 a.m. and I spent 20 minutes reviewing and editing my paper from my favorite writing spot—the old wooden table. I think I've cited my sources correctly in both the works cited section and in the text of the paper.

It's 6:30 p.m. and I'm sitting at my desk where I just finished reading my paper, making edits based on feedback from in Dr. Knox's reply email. It's time for dinner.

It 9:47 p.m. and a thunderstorm has knocked out the power to my home. I'm sitting at my desk using a lantern to light up my keyboard. I rewrote a paragraph of my paper as I didn't like how the words flowed. My laptop battery is waning so I need to close for the night. I hope to have power in the morning—not looking forward to a cold shower.

July 10, 2013

I did not edit my paper today. I did, however, take time during my lunch hour to read my paper.

I sat at my desk, read the paper, ran it through spell check and finding no errors, I closed the file.

July 11, 2013

It's approximately 4:30 p.m. and I'm sitting at my favorite desk. I read my paper—painstakingly looking at every word to ensure its proper use and spelling. While spell-check is great, it's not 100% fool proof. I reviewed my works cited section again to ensure accuracy and think I'm on track. I then moved to the paper where I reviewed how I gave credit to my sources. This is where I get nervous, but I think I've made the correct decisions.

July 12, 2013

It's 5:30 a.m. and before leaving for work I read my paper one last time, changing one word.

Writing this paper was interesting and informative especially since I have a food allergy and have to pay so much attention to what I put in my body. While I was concerned about how I was

