

body&soul

BY RACHEL
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"Alicia Silverstone cares about what she puts in her body and how it affects the environment," says celebrity chef Bethenny Frankel. Alicia and her hubby, Christopher Jarecki, even had an organic wedding.

GOING ORGANIC

Health-conscious celebrities are embracing natural eating. Could it work for you?

Summer is in full swing, which means that fruits and vegetables like peaches, strawberries, asparagus and zucchini are ripe for the picking. When you go to the market, though, you'll often be faced with a choice: organic or nonorganic. Will you be armed with enough information to make an educated decision? Read on to get the knowledge you need.

Limited research suggests that the pesticides and growth hormones used in conventional (nonorganic) food may be linked to an increased risk of cancer and hormonal imbalances. On the other hand, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency say that conventional farming practices are safe. So, in large part, the jury still seems to be out on this issue. "More studies with larger numbers of people need to be done," says Dr. Keecha Harris, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association (ADA). Katherine Tallmadge, an ADA spokesperson, adds, "There is no evidence as far as I know that shows organic food is healthier than nonorganic. But who knows? Nutrition is a constantly evolving science." Tallmadge also points out that she would never discourage people from eating conventionally grown produce. "We have decades of studies showing that people who incorporate regular fruits and vegetables into their diets have lower cancer rates, heart disease risk, body weight and blood pressure," she says. "Still, we would prefer our food be natural. Who wouldn't?"

Natural food chef Bethenny Frankel, who has cooked for organic foodie **Alicia Silverstone**, puts it this way: "Eating organic food is like putting premium fuel in your body. You wouldn't put low-end gas in a great car, would you?" For many people it comes down to cost. Organic food is often pricier than nonorganic, so consumers may have to make a choice based on their budgets. "I don't feel compelled to choose organic every time, but I choose it when I can and when it's affordable," says Tallmadge.

The bottom line? "If you can choose organic, that's great," says Tallmadge.

July 17, 2006

ASK RACHEL

Our health director answers your top questions



DEAR RACHEL

Celebrities like Jennifer Aniston and Cate Blanchett use Bach Flower Essences. What do they really do?

A. It's true that a lot of stars seem to be using this natural remedy — which is made from diluted flower essences — to treat conditions like stress and low energy. The most popular Bach product right now is called Rescue Remedy, and its combination of flower essences are said to calm nerves and relieve stress. (Jen Aniston reportedly uses it to ease anxiety before movie premieres.) This system of healing, developed more than 70 years ago by a British physician named Dr. Edward Bach, is similar to homeopathy and is now used in 66 countries by millions of people, not just celebs. There is also some research backing it up, and it has no known side effects. If you're looking for a stress reliever, give it a try. You can even get your own flower-essence mixture based on your particular needs (each flower essence aids a specific emotion). For more information or to buy, check out bachquiz.com.

DEAR RACHEL

Will using toner after washing my face make my skin healthier?

A. Not so much, according to most dermatologists. "Toner doesn't do much of anything for your skin," says Dr. David Leffell, professor of dermatology and surgery at Yale School of Medicine. Adds Dr. Sandy Tsao, director of dermatologic surgery at Harvard Medical School, "I think toner is entirely unnecessary. The product may claim to clean the skin better or refresh it, but a good cleanser will do that. Plus, people are more compliant with skin care when they have fewer things to do. So if you have to get rid of a step, this is the one to eliminate." Save your money on toner then, and spend it on a gentle non-soap cleanser and moisturizer.

IF YOU HAVE A HEALTH OR FITNESS QUESTION, email askrachel@ok-magazine.com OR WRITE TO: ASK RACHEL, OK! MAGAZINE, 475 5TH AVE., NEW YORK, NY 10017

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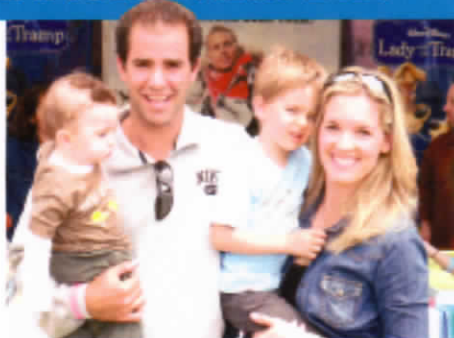
A CELEB FAMILY OVERHAULS THEIR DIET

Bridgette Wilson-Sampras

— actress, wife and mother — has always made it a priority to be healthy. But it wasn't until she and her husband, tennis great Pete Sampras, had their sons, Christian, 3, and Ryan, almost 1, that she started making an effort to bring organic food into their lives. "Before I had kids, I would look at food labels, but I would only look at how many carbs and how much fat the food had," Bridgette tells OK!

"Then when I had my kids and I heard more about the pesticides and hormones in nonorganic food, I thought, 'Wow!' and it made me want to avoid putting those things in my kids' tiny, little bodies," says Bridgette. "In so doing, it transferred over to myself and my husband, so now the whole family eats organic."

To learn more about organic food, Bridgette worked with registered dietician Ellie Krieger, an organic coach with Horizon Organic (horizonorganic.com). "Ellie helped me transform my entire kitchen. She suggested I start with the staples — the things we eat most — so that I didn't get overwhelmed," says Bridgette. "But I found organic food to be



Tennis ace Pete Sampras, actress Bridgette Wilson-Sampras and family.

so available in grocery stores that it's been easy to stick to organic with everything. And my kids don't know the difference. If anything, the food is more flavorful."

Bridgette says her reasons for going organic extend beyond the health of her family; she's also concerned about the effects that conventional farming practices have on the environment and animals. "As I became more informed, I became more adamant about choosing organic for our bodies, for the environment and for the animals. There are so many benefits that I thought, 'If I have the opportunity, why wouldn't I switch?'"

WHAT EXACTLY ARE ORGANIC FOODS?

According to the USDA, organic fruits and vegetables are produced without using pesticides or fertilizer containing synthetic ingredients; organic meat, poultry and dairy products come from animals that are given no growth hormones or antibiotics. Further, organic farmers emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water in order to improve the environment. So, organic food means no artificial additives in your body and a healthier earth.

To find organic food, look for the "USDA Organic" seal. This indicates that the food meets the government's organic standards. Or, says Dr. Harris, shop at your



Bridgette gets advice from nutritionist Ellie Krieger.

local farmer's market. "Often small-scale farmers at these markets meet organic standards or even exceed them, but they don't have the money to go through the process of getting organic certification from the government," she says. Also, buying locally means you get in-season fresh food and you cut down on the fuel it would've taken to ship the produce from a farmer across the country. "This is an additional favor to the earth," says Dr. Harris. 