

SH: Hi, this is Shannon,

QY: This is Qi,

SH: And

Together: Welcome to our food and nature podcast.

QY: A while ago we noticed that not many people really know where our food comes from. We've done some research on it and want to share it with you.

SH: Have you ever noticed those little green USDA organic labels on your food? Well it turns out that those do in fact have a meaning. To be USDA organic, the product must be 95 or 100 percent organic.

QY: But that doesn't clear much up. So we looked into what it means to be organic. It turns out that organic is not about the health of the food but about how it is grown. Farms that are organic foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. They don't use synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, or genetic engineering, so the crops are better for the environment.

SH: So this means that a product can put organic on its label if its natural ingredients are grown in a renewable way. This does not prevent them from adding chemicals. What you really need to pay attention to is the information panel on the packaging that must list the organic ingredients.

QY: Now, I know I didn't know all of this until I did the research. I can't wait to see how much other students know about it without research.

SH: Yes, so let's interview students from each grade and asked them "Where does the Lafayette food come from?"

QY: These are their responses.

Cassandra ('16): We have our own, like, verge garden, so I'm hoping we get food and vegetables there. I don't know where the meat comes from. I think it comes from local farms.

Raman ('17): Bon Appetit, the food vender for Lafayette.

Jason ('15): I think some of the Lafayette food comes from local farms, but besides that, maybe from supermarket?

Gabby (' 14): I know that before this year, it came from factories, but this year they made a lot of efforts to get more organic food.

QY: You know, Shannon, it is better to research in real life rather than just on the Internet.

SH: So true Qi! And that's why we also found the correct answer from our head chef of Upper Farinon.

QY: Bravo! He definitely knows where we get our food.

Head Chef: Uh, all of our produce we order from a company called the Verge Produce Uh, they get 90% of the produce from local farms. Our other one is PFG, where we get our other meats and protein and things like that for Derry Product and Belford farms, which is a local Derry farms which they do all of their own daily products. We we get it from Lafarm, every now and then we just call them up and we asked what they have. They attribute a very good help to us. We give compose all year long. We have a pulper in our dish dish room where it pulps it up and we have these large bags where we make the compose in and that you can ship out to a all the farms after compose.

SH: You know many people talked about the farm but very few talked about the process of growing food. Everyone is occupied with simply the label of "organic" but we forget about the nature behind making food organic.

QY: Farming involves a lot of knowledge about how plants naturally grow. Farmers need to test their soil before even thinking about planting. Right? (SH: so true) Crops need certain acidity and concentration of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, organic matter, and other trace elements for the plants to grow properly.

SH: Lets not forget the fact that farmers need to constantly be aware of the climate and weather. Droughts, floods, freezes, tornadoes, hailstorms, and other common natural occurrences are a constant threat to crops.

QY: Exactly! To get a better appreciation for the natural process of making food, we talked to Sarah from LaFarm.

Sarah: We grow it with organic processes, which means we don't use synthetic fertilizers. So any fertilizer we usually use are based on other agricultural practices. So the one thing we use this year was feather meal and that adds nitrogen to the soil. Before we add anything though we do soil tests. Basically we don't want to over fertilize or spend money or fertilize something that we don't have to. This year we are low in nitrogen. We are also low in organic matter, so that to increase that we use the leaf mulch and leaf mold and cover cropping. Pesticides were also trying to use the minimum amount. This year we use inner kalium clay called surround, which tricks the bugs into um thinking that plant they land on is something they don't want to eat.

SH: So, we've been talking about how food is defined by how it grows but we have yet to cover how food differs by where it grows. Food, again, just like nature, is different in each area. So Qi, since you are from China, maybe we can hear about how food there is different from the food served at Lafayette.

QY: Well, my pleasure. For common vegetables, there is no big difference. However the way we get Mu'er and bamboo shoots is unique. They grow naturally on the mountain, in the forest, without human interference. During raining season, after a night's rain, Mu'er and bamboo shoots are ready to harvest. So we can get the most natural fresh food in the market. If they are transported to farther places, they will be dehydrated. Isn't it awesome?

SH: Wow that's like really awesome and very different from here and one more quick question. What do you miss the most and why can't you get it here?

QY: I miss my Chinese sauces the most. We have dozens of typical sauces that are used for different kinds of cookings. I don't think we have them here because some ingredients are specifically produced in China.

SH: Those sauces sound like something special. And, this definitely means that food is specific to each area. So let's bring in some other international students to give their opinions on this topic.

SH: So, let's welcome one student from Morocco. Hi Othman.

O: Hi.

SH: So, do you like to eat?

O: Of course I like to eat.

SH: All right we have some questions for you then. All right, how did you get your food at home?

O: Uh, my mom cooked for me. She will get from local market most of the time like cause like Morocco they have like local markets everywhere. That's where everyone gets vegetable and food.

SH: What food do you miss the most and why can you not get it here?

O: Oh I got it. I miss couscous the most, the Moroccan couscous, and I can't get it here cause no one can cook it here. That's simple cause it's too complicated in addition takes a long time.

SH: Thanks.

O: Of course.

QY: Let's welcome Feevan who is from Ethiopia.
Hi, Feevan.

F: Hi, Qi

QY: Do you like to eat?

F: I love eating.

QY: So, How can you tell if your food is organic?

F: I can tell by looking at the color of the food. If the food is too bright I can tell that it has been genetically modified.

QY: Where do you get your food from?

F: Um, I usually get my food from local grocery stores or when I used to live in Asian Africa, I usually go to local flea market.

QY: Wow, sounds great. And, what food do you miss the most here and why can't you get it?

F: Um, I really miss Ethiopian food. Um, my mom makes the best kind and the reason I can't get it here is because of the spices. They are they are local to Ethiopia, so you just can't find it here.

QY: A lot of what everyone said was how food, especially spices, is different around the world because they are grown only in certain environments. We often forget how food is grown rather than just appearing on our plates.

SH: So true! Food is a natural process of growing using the nutrients in the soil, water, and air. Food is nature and nature nurtures food.

QY: I feel like I know so much more about our food just by researching for this podcast. Well, you know Shannon. Well you know Shannon, all this talk about food is making me hungry. Lets go eat!

SH: Woo, that sounds so good. What do you want to eat?

QY: Maybe Pizza, milk?

SH: How about something organic?

QY: Oh, yeah!