



Notes from Plymouth's RIVER COTTAGE

Is organic just a fancy label? Joe Draper encourages us to make the most of Devon's best produce

Could we all eat only organic food? With the ever-increasing world population, it could be very difficult for farmers to produce only organic food due to the changing climate and disease. However, this doesn't mean we can't make a huge impact on our lives, communities, country and the world by being more conscious of how our food is produced and the welfare of our fellow friends.

Organic is not just a fancy label. Organic agriculture helps protect our health and planet from exposure to toxic chemicals that are used in industrial farming. Pesticides end up in the ground, water, air and food supply and can lead to health problems. Organic farming methods result in less use of oil-based fertilisers and pesticides meaning higher levels of carbon are maintained in soil. The more organic farming becomes common practice, the more we can help offset agriculture's greenhouse emissions.

We take pride here in Britain in our produce and rightly so – our farmers produce excellent crops and meat. The more we are conscious of our health and the benefits of eating local and organic food and increasing the welfare of our animal friends, the more we will start to make a real difference in farmers' and our own lives.

For me, it's really important to visit the River Cottage Canteen's suppliers to see for myself the impact organic farming makes on our communities and how much and hard graft it takes to

Joe's favourite producers

Eversfield Organics – organic meat; Riverford Farm – organic vegetables and dairy; Dartmoor Chilli Farm; Sharpham – cheese and wine; Luke's Fruit Farm; Higher Hacknell Farm – organic meat; Salcombe Dairy – ice cream; Luscombe Drinks – soft drinks and juices; Quicke's Traditional – cheese; Ella artisan baker – bread and pastries.



Aberdeen Angus at Eversfield Organics

“It always amazes me the real passion Devon farmers have for what they do”

make a living doing the right thing.

When I go and visit Mark at Eversfield Organic Meats, I can see how well looked after his happy cattle are, grazing freely in open farmland and getting the attention they need. This shows in their meat which is full of flavour and the right textures – something you won't find in large, commercially-reared animals where the farming is all about quantity and speed of growth – not quality and good welfare.

It always amazes me the real passion Devon farmers have for what they do. Their commitment and understanding for good wholesome food that is sustainably produced and the welfare of their animals. There are so many local producers who are really making a difference.

It can be hard to buy all your foods from

organic producers but to buy local produce is still one of the best ways to help your local economy. In many cases small producers don't have the means or finances to be certified organic, but this does not mean they are not following the right processes with the aim to be sustainable. I think if we know why and what we are buying we'll start to see positive changes in our shopping habits and this will have a great impact on our and future generations economy and health.

There will always be the need for genetically modified food due to the huge population of us humans and our need to eat. But I hope we can make a significant difference to our current ways and with the price of conventional farming going up, I'm sure we will see no difference in price for organic produce much sooner than you might think. ■

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