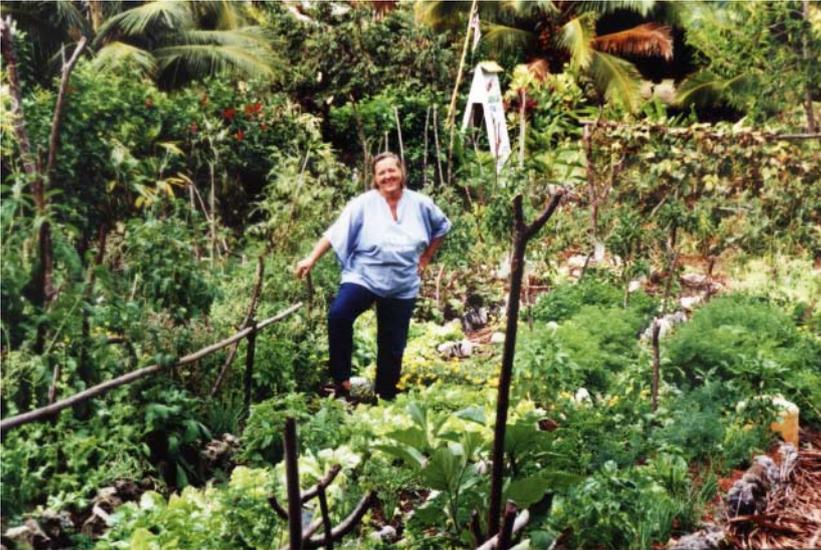


# ORGANIC LIVING BEGINS IN THE MIND



Sonja Raela in her organic garden Aitutaki, Cook Islands

Most people associate the word organic with food. Safe nutritious food, grown without pesticides, chemicals or petroleum based fertilizers.

But in reality going Organic is a lifestyle choice based on an endless array of possibilities that will empower you to choose a higher quality of life rather than a higher standard of living, and in the process allow you to become a responsible consumer. Methods of producing food like the factory farming of chickens, pigs and cattle have spread because they lead to food that is sold for less than organically grown food.

An organic lifestyle will go some way to improving your health, reducing the toxic burden in your body, and reducing the environmental impact of processed, packaged and transported food. When you choose to buy anything you will increasingly consider not only the price and the ethics of your choices but also the impact on those you value dearly—yourself, your family and your world.

All the pollution in the world is caused by people and their lifestyles. When you begin examining the life cycle of consumer goods, you will soon see that behind almost every product there is energy, resources, a factory, transportation and ultimately pollution.

Today backyard vegetable gardens and their accompanying chicken pen are in short supply. Instead of putting our collective energies into growing food many of us are choosing to shop, buying processed supermarket food. Processed food, stripped of nutrients, heat treated, and blended with chemical additives to extend shelf life, now accounts for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of total world food sales. Our collective buying power has influenced this growth of food processing. Parboiled rice, canned soups, vegetables and fruits, breakfast cereals, instant coffee and more. Supermarket shelves groan under the weight of packaged ready to eat processed food.

Food processing requires enormous energy. Factories to change the natural ingredients, package the new food and then to store or refrigerate. Processed and packaged, the food must be transported across the country or more often across the world. Think of the energy needed and the pollution produced for all this to happen and compare that with the energy needed to prepare a home cooked meal using fresh local produce. Processed and packaged food might save you time but it certainly won't save the world!

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passion for  
organic  
gardening,  
cooking and  
nutrition



Contact

Dee Pignéguay

[dee@feedmeright.co.nz](mailto:dee@feedmeright.co.nz)

[www.feedmeright.co.nz](http://www.feedmeright.co.nz)

+64 9 444 9342

For processed food to be transported safely it must be packaged. This requires a mine for aluminium, an oil well for plastics a forest for making cardboard and a sand mine for the production of glass bottles. Think of the energy involved here for products that are often used once and thrown away. And even if the packaging is recycled, aluminium cans for example require more energy for melting down. Packaging also requires transportation first to the factories and then again when the food is shipped across the world and across cities to reach a supermarket near you.

Ships and container wharves, huge trucks and trailers and endless motorways are needed to export and import food! It has almost reached the stage where food needs a passport to document the air miles it has traveled on its journey from farm to your plate. Perishable exotic foods flown in from far flung corners of the world requires airplanes and airports as well as fungicides to make sure it is not carrying any unwanted ailens. Much perfectly good food producing land is covered in tarmac for airplanes and their runways.

With the ever increasing sprawl of our cities, food production has been pushed out farther and farther into rural areas. We're loosing touch with the natural loops of farming as small family farms, orchards and poultry producers are no longer just a short trip up the highway. Increasingly even in New Zealand vegetables and fruits grown here are also being transported long distances.

So what choices can you make? What practical ways can you get your food without adding to global warming, oil pollution, obesity and landfills?

Begin by choosing food in season, fresh and locally grown. Find out if there is a farmer's market in your area. Food grown in nutrient rich soil without pesticides, fungicides and chemical fertilizers is the cornerstone of preventive medicine. Nature's fresh whole foods have no need for preservatives, waxes or irradiation to extend their shelf life.

The French gastronmist Anthelme Brillat-Savarin said, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are."



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