Yes, Organic Foods are Different from “Natural” Foods

(NaturalPapa – Derek Markham) For those of us who believe strongly in the benefits of eating organic foods (for both our own bodies and for the health of the soil and air and water), the Certified Organic label is a key indicator of foods make the cut for our grocery shopping.

But there’s a lot of confusion out there, because marketers and designers have been labeling food and personal care products with all sorts of meaningless language, including “natural”, “all-natural”, and “contains natural ingredients”, which don’t require meeting any standards to use.

And if a product fits the general description as a “natural” food item, it will probably end up on the shelves of a natural foods store, where many shoppers may be led to believe that either it’s an organically grown food product, or that it doesn’t contain GMO ingredients, or that it’s good for them, none of which may be the case.

After working for years in the natural and organic food industry, as well as being the main grocery buyer for my family during that time, I got to be a pretty keen label reader and a labeling skeptic, and have always tried to debunk label claims for friends and family (much to the dismay of those who found out their “natural” foods choices weren’t really any healthier than those found in mainstream grocery stores).

At a very basic level, in order to be labeled as such, organic foods are subject to stringent environment and animal welfare standards enforced by USDA, while the label of “natural” has no official definition, and little to no enforcement of

its misuse.

A new public education campaign aims to clear up some of that confusion around organic foods and natural foods claims, and help consumers make an educated choice when it comes to the food they buy and eat. This isn’t just a little issue, either, as more than $20 billion of products with claims of being “natural” are sold every year, including many with GMOs, pesticide residues, synthetic food additives, and high fructose corn syrup.

http://www.youtube.com/embed/AftZshnP8fs
“Foods made with the use of toxic persistent pesticides and even genetically engineered ingredients are being labeled as natural. Only organic guarantees that food is produced without the use of toxic persistent pesticides, hormones, antibiotics or genetically engineered ingredients. Only organic gives you complete piece of mind.” – Gary Hirshberg, Chairman of Stonyfield Farm.

Find out more about the difference between organic foods and those that claim to be “natural” foods, at Only Organic.