

Cooking oil

With olive oil being touted as an antidote to ageing, it's little wonder it has suddenly become incredibly popular as a salad dressing and a cooking ingredient. The great rush to meet this increased demand has led to expanded production in Mediterranean countries, which is now threatening local ecology and causing large-scale soil erosion. Buying organic oils helps to prevent these problems – and ensures that the product is free from GM ingredients.

TROUBLE IN SPAIN

An important advantage of most olive oil is that it is almost certain to be GM-free, but the food and development organisation Sustain reports that over-intensification of olive oil production in Spain has resulted in erosion and other agronomic and environmental problems, causing irreversible damage in over 40 per cent of Andalusia. The new methods of production have also involved increasing the use of herbicides, pesticides and fungicides. Sustain recommends that consumers choose organic olive oil wherever possible.

PURITY AT A COST

Most of the UK's oilseed rape is grown as a winter crop, which Sustain argues has had a detrimental effect on Britain's environment, causing biodiversity to suffer and bird populations to decline. Winter crops have also at times provided an excuse for mass shooting of wood pigeons.

Although British farmers are not likely to be introducing GM crops just yet, the

whole issue remains important for cooking oils. Worryingly for consumers concerned about GM issues, vegetable oil produced from GM plants does not have to be labelled as GM. This is because the processing is thought to eliminate any proteins or DNA that might otherwise be present. Consumers should be aware that maize oil, soya oil and canola (rapeseed) oils may be processed from GM plants, especially if they originate from North America, whose international trade in grains is based on a commodity flow system where no distinction is made between GM and non-GM crops.

In 2002, the Food Standards Agency considered options for food labelling proposed by the European Commission. One of these options was to extend the current labelling to include foods derived from GM material, as well as food containing GM. This would cover vegetable oils. However, the more likely outcome will be that current labelling regulations will remain, with a new additional label of 'GM free' being introduced to denote products which are free from all GM technology. In the meantime, those who want to avoid any GM links should opt for sunflower oil, olive oil or organic oils.

60-SECOND GREEN GUIDE

- Buy glass bottles instead of plastic ones
- There is little risk of active GM materials being present in any oil
- For the lowest risk of GM 'contamination', use olive oil
- Most vegetable oils are equally good for you

OWN-BRAND OILS

Most supermarkets refuse to say which companies produce their own-brand cooking oils. Pressure from consumers may change his policy eventually, but until we can be certain of the identity of the own-brand suppliers, the brand will continue to be rated with the supermarket. Unlike other companies, supermarkets are rated according to their stocking policies. A recent positive development, however, is that supermarkets are beginning to produce their own brand organic olive oils.



- Meridian
- Suma



- Filippo Berio



- Crisp & Dry
- Mazola
- Olivio
- Princes
- Pura

BRAND OWNERSHIP

The multinationals Unilever and Mitsubishi own most of the recognised olive oil brands. Neither of these companies boast particularly respectable ethical records. Both have received criticism for their animal rights and welfare policies, as well as for using GM in some of their products. Mitsubishi is involved in nuclear and armament activities and Unilever have had a number of labour complaints levelled against them. Suma and Meridian received the highest rating. There is yet to be a major brand which practices fair trade.

PACKAGING

More expensive oils are likely to come in glass bottles, which are easy to recycle. Products in the lower price range are almost always packaged in plastic bottles, some of which may be made from PVC (which is identifiable by a '3' inside a recycling symbol on the base of the bottle). Plastic recycling in the UK is still very poorly developed, with about 95 per cent of waste being landfilled or incinerated.

COOKING OIL BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT		ANIMALS		PEOPLE		OTHER		Company group	
	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	POLITICAL DONATIONS	ARMAMENTS	FAIR TRADE	BOYCOTT		
CRISP & DRY	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	24	Mitsubishi Corporation
FILIPPO BERIO	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	72	Filippo Berio
FLORA	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	44	Unilever
MAZOLA	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	24	Mitsubishi Corporation
MERIDIAN	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	76	Greencore Group
OLIVIO	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	44	Unilever
PRINCES	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	24	Mitsubishi Corporation
PURA	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	40	Archer Daniels Midland Company
SUMA	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	92	Suma Wholefoods

- Key
- Top rating
 - Middle rating
 - Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation

Crisps

The big crisp manufacturers make a lot of noise about the taste of their products, but prefer to only whisper about what they are made of. The label will usually reveal a lengthy list of ingredients, most of which are artificial flavourings and other additives. Alongside the health problems associated with fried and fatty foods, these additives are thought to exacerbate hyperactivity in children. A better option is the (slightly less unhealthy) organic equivalent.

KEEPING KIDS HEALTHY

The Food Commission has sharply criticised snacks promoted by footballers, and accused food marketing firms of undermining children’s nutrition. A supermarket survey failed to find any healthy children’s food promoted using football imagery. Walkers was the main culprit with its tartrazine-laced Footballs, promotions in association with Gary Lineker and David Seaman, and an FA Premier League sticker offer in its other brands. One mother on the Food Commission’s Parents’ Jury said: ‘It would be better if children were shown that the way to emulate their sporting heroes is to eat and drink healthily.’

Crisps can be healthier than a lot of junk foods, but they should be eaten in moderation. A recent study by Baby Organix found that children are consuming more than twice as much salt in their diet as the government recommends. The UK Asthma & Allergy Research Centre says that ‘significant changes in children’s hyperactive behaviour could be produced

by the removal of colourings and additives from their diet’. It is recommended that brilliant blue (E133), tartrazine (E102), quinoline yellow (E104) and sunset yellow (E110) – colours which appear most commonly in snacks such as Monster Munch – should be eliminated from kids’ diets. Monosodium glutamate (E621) is another controversial additive present in many crisps, despite being banned for use in baby foods.

Some crisp manufacturers are also moving into the wholesale use of artificial sweeteners because they cost a fraction of the price of sugar. Many are then ignoring their legal obligation to state directly under the brand name that a product contains sweeteners, consigning it instead to the small print.

NATURAL AND ORGANIC

Tra’fo, Kettle, Cape Cod and Jonathan Crisp products contain only ‘natural’ ingredients.

Companies have a small circle in the GM column on the table if not all of their

products can be guaranteed free from GM-derived ingredients. Although companies in Britain have made considerable progress in sourcing non-GM derivatives, many on the 'red list' are there because of a lack of assurance that dairy ingredients such as whey are from non-GM fed cows.

Certified organic products are always totally GM-free. Many supermarkets are now selling own-brand organic crisps, which are being manufactured for them by companies such as Stour Valley Foods. Jonathan Crisp and Tra'fo crisps are all organic, and Kettle has one organic variety.

Monsanto is currently developing bruise-free potatoes, as well as a 'higher-solids' potato, which will absorb less oil during processing. It remains to be seen whether they will fare better than its Bt potatoes, which companies such as McDonalds,

P&G and Pepsi subsidiary Frito-Lay are now refusing to use, even in the US, due to the high level of public concern about the technology.

PACKAGING

Old-fashioned polypropylene packets, as used by Seabrooks and a lot of the 'top snacks', are in theory easier to recycle than the plasticated foils which most manufacturers now use.

Pringles cartons are the ultimate packaging excess. They contain six different materials, including steel, aluminium, PET and polyethylene, some of them in composite form. As Pringles now make up at least ten per cent of the entire UK 'bagged snacks' market, they are becoming a significant contributor to landfill waste.

CRISPS BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT		ANIMALS		PEOPLE		OTHER		Company group						
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	POLITICAL DONATIONS	ARMAMENTS		FAIR TRADE	BOYCOTT	PUBLIC RECORD	CRITICISMS	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX
BRANNIGANS	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	48	Finalrealm Consortium
CAPE COD	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	64	Lance Inc
GOLDEN WONDER	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	64	Hayel Saeed Anam Group
HIGHLANDER SNACKS	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	64	Unichips Finanziara SpA
JONATHAN CRISP	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	76	Natural Crisps
KETTLE CHIPS	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	64	Kettle Foods Inc
KP	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	44	Finalrealm Consortium
MISSION FOODS	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	56	Gruma SA de CV
PRINGLES	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	20	Procter & Gamble
RED MILL	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	64	Continental Foods
SEABROOK	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	64	Seabrook Potato Crisps Ltd
STOUR VALLEY	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	64	Stour Valley Foods Ltd
TRA'FO	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	80	FZ Organic Food BV
WALKERS	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	40	PepsiCo

Key
 ● Top rating
 ○ Middle rating
 ● Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation

- GOOD SHOPPING GUIDE
ETHICAL COMPANY**
- Jonathan Crisp
 - Tra'fo

- ?**
- Cape Cod
 - Golden Wonder
 - Highlander Snacks
 - Kettle Chips
 - Mission Foods
 - Red Mill
 - Seabrook
 - Stour Valley

- X**
- Brannigans
 - KP
 - Pringles
 - Walkers

Fish

It was once thought that the sea was an inexhaustible source of fish, but over-exploitation has resulted in depleted stocks and damaged marine ecosystems. Overfishing is one of the world's most pressing environmental issues, and has severe social and economic repercussions. Billions of people depend upon fishing for food, and thousands more for employment. The prevention of overfishing is paramount to the survival of the industry, those who depend on it, and the natural marine environment.

THE ISSUE

A fishery is an area of the sea where the target fish species is caught by net, line or another fishing method. Fisheries that are ecologically balanced and are not depleted of natural resources are becoming increasingly rare. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, only one quarter of the world's fish stocks are within safe environmental levels. The remaining stocks are either partly or fully overfished or in a serious stage of depletion. This means that the majority of the world's fisheries are in need of management reviews if they are not to be lost forever.

The consequences of overfishing are already manifest. In 1992, one of the world's richest natural resources, the cod stocks off the Canadian Grand Banks, Newfoundland, disappeared virtually overnight as a result of poor fisheries management. This had a devastating impact on the marine

environment and the local community. About 40,000 jobs were lost and the fishery still remains closed today.

There are numerous reasons for the collapse of fisheries and the depletion of fish stocks. Technological advances have enabled the fishing industry to target the resource more precisely and take more from our seas than is sustainable.

Bigger boats, more powerful engines, developments in radar and sophisticated refrigeration systems mean that fishermen can stay out at sea for longer, travel further and locate fish more easily. Catching fish, therefore, is no longer a lottery and as a result more fish are being caught than ever before. Another reason for the collapse of fisheries is the marketplace, which sanctions overfishing by allowing the sale of endangered fish for profit. The problem is that the market is about today and tomorrow and maybe next week, but certainly not about ten years' time.

PEOPLE AND FOOD

In the developed world, seafood is regularly enjoyed by billions of people for taste and health reasons. However, the current unsustainable fishing climate is more of a threat to developing countries, where 3.5 billion people currently depend upon the ocean for their primary source of food (UNEP 2004). If fish stocks continue to deplete, then demand for fish in these coastal areas may outstrip the supply.

LIVELIHOOD AND EMPLOYMENT

As a major renewable resource, fisheries provide a livelihood for hundreds of thousands of people around the world, sustaining coastal towns and villages and representing a valuable source of income for the global community. The role of fishermen is crucial in the lives of many communities that fish for local needs. 90 per cent operate on a small scale, but they account for over half of the global fish catch (UNEP 2004). These are the fishermen who will be increasingly squeezed by the large operators who come in search of new stocks as they exhaust the old. It is the greed of the rich world that has produced the shortages and it will be the wealth of the rich world that buys what fish are left, even though they are essential to the very existence of the poor.

For the sake of their livelihoods, fishermen around the world need to be assured that the fishing industry has a secure future, whether they fish locally or on a much larger scale. Unsustainable fishing affects fishermen in both developed and developing countries alike.

CALL TO ACTION

Raising awareness of overfishing is the first step towards tackling the problem.

Ethical consumers can demand fish from sustainable and well-managed stocks to help safeguard the world's seafood supply. This will put pressure on retailers to stock sustainably harvested seafood products. This in turn will help to provide incentives for the seafood industry to fish in a responsible way.

ONE SOLUTION: THE MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (MSC)

In the mid 1990s, conservationists and industrialists alike saw that they had a common interest in changing the marketplace in terms of its operation. This led to the creation of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), an international charity dedicated to saving the world's fish stocks. The MSC created an environmental standard to reward well-managed and sustainable fisheries. Fisheries of any size, scale, type or location can voluntarily apply to be assessed against the MSC Standard by independent certification bodies.

The MSC Standard considers the condition of the fish stock, the impact of fishing on the marine ecosystem and the management of the fishery. If they pass, certified fisheries win the right to use the MSC blue eco-label on their products, harnessing consumer preference for sustainable seafood. It is possible to protect fish stocks and marine ecosystems whilst continuing to fish, if the fishing is conducted in a responsible manner.

Examples of responsible fishing include building escape hatches into lobster creel

pots, as in the Western Australian Rock Lobster fishery, the first in the world to receive the MSC environmental standard. These hatches enable small lobsters to escape and reproduce while the adults remain within the creel. Another example from the Scottish Loch Torridon and Nephrops fishery, certified to the MSC Standard, is fisherman throwing juvenile fish back into the sea to allow them to reproduce, ensuring that the fish stock remains healthy. Measures to reduce by-catch are also being adopted in order to maintain healthy ecosystems. By-catch, such as fish, marine mammals and seabirds, can be caught accidentally by fishing gear and then thrown back into the ocean dead, disrupting the natural balance of the marine ecosystem. The New Zealand hoki fishery, certified to the MSC Standard, is implementing various measures at the fishery to reduce by-catch.

At the end of 2005 there were 15 fisheries certified to the MSC Standard and many more are at some stage of the fishery assessment process. In total these equate to approximately 4 per cent of the total wild global fish supply.

The MSC provides a solution to the global problem of overfishing and is a market driven programme. Today there are over 300 seafood products carrying the MSC label in 17 countries. New products are appearing every week. The consumer is empowered to make the best environmental choice in seafood, which is needed to complete the circle of influence that uses market forces to ensure the future of sustainable fisheries.

For information on where to buy MSC labelled products, please visit <www.msc.org,

or see relevant links from www.goosbing.co.uk. Through our specific buying habits we can all help place a global industry back on the path to stability and long-term sustainability.

THE FOLLOWING FISHERIES ARE CURRENTLY CERTIFIED BY THE MARINE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL:

- Alaska Pollock – Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
- Alaska Pollock – Gulf of Alaska
- Alaska Salmon
- Australian Mackerel Icefish
- BSAI Pacific Cod Freezer Longline
- Burry Inlet Cockles
- Hastings Fleet Dover Sole Fishery
- Hastings Fleet Pelagic Fishery
- Loch Torridon Nephrops
- Mexican Baja California Red Rock Lobster
- New Zealand Hoki
- North Sea Herring
- South African Hake
- South Georgia Toothfish
- South West Mackerel Handline
- Thames Herring
- US North Pacific Halibut
- US North Pacific Sablefish
- West Australian Rock Lobster

Ice cream

It's a safe bet that the traditional recipe for ice cream didn't include 'E110 sunset yellow' and residues of bovine somatotropin, but for some of the big-brand versions this may be the case. Many companies are now making an effort to reduce the number of additives in their desserts, but the only safe way to ensure an E-number free ice cream is to stick to the small producers and buy organic or dairy-free.

INGREDIENTS TO AVOID

Real ice cream should be made like an egg custard, then churned and frozen, but it inevitably becomes more expensive as the purity increases. The cheaper ice creams on the market are combinations of skimmed milk or milk powders, with lots of sugar and sweeteners, and added ingredients such as hardened vegetable fats, emulsifiers, colourings, flavourings, acidity regulators and other artificial processing aids, whipped up with lots of air.

A quick look at the ingredients list should be enough to tell us what level of additives a product contains. Look out for the worst E-numbers, such as annatto (E160b), sunset yellow (E110) and carmoisine (E122), as these have been linked to health problems including asthma, rashes and hyperactivity. Some have also been linked to cancer in test animals. Particular concern has been raised about E110, a coal-tar dye which is a by-product of the petrochemical industry: because of its potential toxicity, manufacturers have been persuaded not to use it in baby food.

The growth hormone bovine somatotropin (commonly called rBST here, or BGH in the US) was designed to be given to cows daily to increase their milk yield. Due to serious health concerns for the cows and for humans, the EU introduced a moratorium on the drug. This is still in effect, meaning the use of rBST is not currently legal in the EU. The Soil Association say that their organic standards prohibit the use of rBST in the production of milk, and naturally none of the non-dairy alternatives contain this hormone. The Organic Consumers Association in the US has an ongoing boycott of Haagen-Dazs in protest against its use of milk from cows injected with rBST.

OTHER OPTIONS

Manufacturers of organic ice cream are generally more aware of the benefits of natural ingredients than the big name brands. All the smaller producers included in the table opposite state their commitment to minimising the use of artificial ingredients in their ice creams.

Some larger retailers are also reducing the number of artificial additives in their ranges and selling more organic goods, which by definition are likely to contain a higher proportion of natural ingredients.

Dairy-free and vegan alternatives to ice cream are also available, most of which use soya in place of animal ingredients such as milk and cream. Soya is a good source of protein and essential amino acids, and has been linked to reductions in 'bad' cholesterol when eaten as part of a balanced diet – although in this case the added sugars in ice cream might outweigh any potential benefit!

Choose organic brands and those certified as GMO free to ensure no genetically modified soya has found its way into the product. Soya is one of the most widely produced GM crops, so it is worth keeping an eye on the label.

TASTE TESTS

The UK Consumers' Association has held taste tests for a range of ice creams and frozen desserts. Green & Black's chocolate ice cream came out as a favourite, and its vanilla range went down well too. Rocombe Farm's chocolate and vanilla flavours also tingled the taste buds, both coming out with an 'above average' rating. The Swedish Glace vanilla flavour came up trumps, although Tofutti's equivalent didn't fare so well, scoring an 'average' rating, as did its chocolate dessert.

Many ice cream cartons are not suitable for remanufacturing, even though they can be recycled. At the moment, facilities to carry out the process are rare. The best option is to find a new use for the tubs at home, rather than throwing them away.



- Cream O'Galloway
- Mother Hemp
- Oat Supreme
- Rocombe Farm
- Swedish Glace
- Yeo Valley



- Green & Black's
- Little Big Food Co
- Tofutti



- Ben & Jerry's
- Carte D'Or
- Haagen Dazs
- Magnum
- Wall's

Jams & spreads

Although home-made jams, marmalade, lemon curd and other spreads usually have much tastier ingredients than those on the supermarket shelves, few of us have the time, opportunity or indeed inclination to slave over a hot stove making it ourselves. So for the healthiest spreads at breakfast and tea-time, seek out the brands whose jams have the highest percentage of real fruit, rather than concentrates, and don't include artificial sweeteners and preservatives.

FRUIT LEVELS

To be called jam, a preserve only needs to have a minimum of 25 per cent fruit content, while marmalade can have as little as 20 per cent fruit. It is not always obvious that in many commercial jams some of the fruit can be from frozen or concentrated sources. The fruit and sugar is also heavily boiled, which reduces its nutritional value.

'Extra' jam has 45g of fruit per 100g. Compotes are preserves with very high fruit levels, so they do not set in the same way as traditional jam, but they retain much more of the nutritional value of the fruit.

OTHER INGREDIENTS

To be labelled as jam or marmalade, a preserve has to have at least 60g of sugar per 100g of product – even for the extra-fruit varieties. Reduced-sugar jams have 30-55g, but will often have added colour, emulsifier, preservative and stabiliser. Fruit spreads are usually purely derived from

fruit, relying on a fruit juice such as apple for sweetness. This means they are best kept in the fridge as they do not keep as long as sugar-rich jam or marmalade.

Vegetarians and vegans need to check the labels of jams and spreads before they buy, as some contain animal-derived ingredients. Lemon curd contains eggs, which are likely to be battery-produced except in the case of organic products. Some jellies and jams may contain gelatine, an animal by-product, to aid with setting.

No genetically engineered fruit is permitted in the UK but the enzymes used to process the fruit, gelatine or added sweeteners could have involved GM. Choosing organic products helps to avoid all these additives. The only brand that is exclusively organic is Bionova. Other companies, such as Meridian, Whole Earth, Hartleys (Wm P Hartley brand) and Baxters make some organic jams. The Herb Stall was the only organic lemon curd producer found at the time of the research.

ICE CREAM BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS				PEOPLE				OTHER				Company group
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	POLITICAL DONATIONS	ARMAMENTS	FAIR TRADE	BOYCOTT	PUBLIC RECORD CRITICISMS	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION				
BEN & JERRY'S	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	44	Unilever		
CARTE D'OR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	44	Unilever		
CREAM O'GALLOWAY	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	80	Cream O'Galloway		
GREEN & BLACKS	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	68	Cadbury Schweppes		
HAAGEN-DAZS	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	40	Nestlé		
LITTLE BIG FOOD CO	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	The Little Big Food Company		
MAGNUM	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	44	Unilever		
MOTHER HEMP	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	84	Mother Hemp		
OAT SUPREME	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	76	First Foods		
ROCOMBE FARM	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	80	The Yeo Valley Organic Company		
SWEDISH GLACE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	76	Fayrefield Group		
TOFUTTI	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	60	Tofutti Brands Inc		
WALL'S	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	44	Unilever		
YEO VALLEY	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	80	The Yeo Valley Organic Company		

Key
 ● Top rating
 ○ Middle rating
 ● Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation

SWEETENERS AND PRESERVATIVES

Artificial sweeteners may be used in ‘diet’ products, under a variety of guises such as aspartame, saccharin or xylitol. The first of these, aspartame, can be found in over 6,000 products (including crisps, vitamin pills and soft drinks), and has been the subject of numerous health scares. The most recent, in 2005, centred on an Italian study that linked it to cancer in rats, and sparked a public call by one MP for the sweetener to be banned.

Moreover, some campaigners believe there is reason to doubt the original research that led to aspartame being approved for consumption, because they say there was pressure on the scientists from the sweetener industry. Nevertheless, the European Food Safety Authority has said that no changes will be made to its position on aspartame until a thorough review of the Italian study has been carried out.

Alongside sweeteners, preservatives may be used in higher fruit-content products. Preservatives such as potassium sorbate (E200-213) are suspected of causing allergic reactions, gastric irritation and problems with conception in some people. Manufacturers could avoid using them by noting a shorter shelf life and recommending refrigeration.

PACKAGING

Although most fruit preserves are still packed in glass jars, there has been increasing use of squeeze plastic bottles or pouches by companies such as Hartleys and Robertsons. Some honey manufacturers are starting to pack their products in rigid plastic jars, and this could happen in the jam market too. Before you buy, check for the triangle symbol on the back of packaging to see if the product is suitable for recycling.

JAMS & SPREADS BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS				PEOPLE				OTHER				Company group
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	POLITICAL DONATIONS	ARMAMENTS	FAIR TRADE	BOYCOTT	PUBLIC RECORD	CRITICISMS	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX			
BAXTERS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	60	Baxters Food Group		
BIONOVA	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	80	FZ Organic Food BV		
BONNE MAMAN	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	64	Andros UK Ltd		
DUERR'S	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	72	F. Duerr & Sons Ltd		
FRANK COOPER	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	52	RHM		
HARTLEY'S	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	48	Premier Foods		
MERIDIAN	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	76	Greencore Group		
ROBERTSONS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	52	RHM		
STUTE	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	64	Stute Foods Ltd		
THE HERB STALL	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	80	The Herb Stall		
TIPTREE	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	64	Wilkin & Sons Ltd		
WHOLE EARTH	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	72	Wessanen Group		

Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation



- Bionova
- Meridian
- The Herb Stall



- Baxters
- Bonne Maman
- Duerr's
- Stute
- Tiptree
- Whole Earth



- Frank Cooper
- Hartley's
- Robertsons

Pasta

Tagliatelli, linguine, fusilli or just good old spaghetti. Whichever kind you fancy, there is no doubt that pasta is a popular carbohydrate, whether in a salad or mixed with vegetables, seafood or meat as the basis of a main meal. Although most of the different kinds of pasta available are equally healthy, there is always scope to go one better and seek out the organic or fresh varieties – or perhaps even make it at home.

PURE WHEAT

Traditional quality pasta should be made with 100 per cent durum wheat, in wholewheat or semolina form. However, with growth in the own-brand market pushing prices down, many of the cheaper pastas now contain ‘soft wheat’ substitutes, which can result in a slightly sticky or slimy texture.

A richer pasta is produced with the addition of egg, making it unsuitable for vegans. Tomato or spinach is added to produce the distinctive red or green pastas, and some pasta-makers are fond of ingredients such as nettles, beetroot and chilli.

FRESH PASTA

In Italy, fresh pasta is available in over a hundred variations of shape and filling, and is sold in specialist shops to be eaten on the day of purchase. In the UK, most of the fresh pasta available is not quite so fresh, as it is usually preserved in a modified environment to extend the shelf

life. Pasta from specialist shops is often very good, but many of the ready-prepared fresh pasta meals on the supermarket shelves are rather stodgy with few authentic ingredients.

Fresh pasta most often contains egg, which again is not good news for vegans, and if the pasta is from a non-organic company the eggs will probably be from battery farms. All brands certified as organic by the Soil Association will contain only free-range eggs.

ORGANIC, WHOLEWHEAT AND GM

As the supermarket own-brands are responsible for more than three quarters of all UK pasta sales, the introduction of organic own-brand pasta ranges is a positive step towards sustainable agriculture.

Shoppers need to be wary of wholewheat pasta varieties (unless they are clearly marked as organic) because they are far more likely to contain chemical residues, as the husk or bran of the wheat absorbs more of the pesticides and fertilisers than the semolina used in white varieties.

As there are no GM varieties cleared for sale within the EU, dry pasta in its standard form should be free from GM ingredients, with the possible exception of the red tomato pasta, which could contain GM tomato paste. All the pasta certified as organic by the Soil Association is sure to be GM-free.

PACKAGING

Most pasta is packaged in polypropylene, which although recyclable will usually end up in landfill. Given the expansion of the dried product during cooking and the need for thicker packaging for fresh pasta (in order to maintain the seal around the modified environment), far greater volumes of plastic are needed for the fresh product. This makes it a less environmentally-friendly option than cheaper dried pasta.

ALTERNATIVES

For those with wheat or gluten intolerance, Orgran produces a rice pasta which has been produced in isolation from all other foodstuffs. Another possible alternative may be one of the speciality pastas produced by La Terra e Cielo, which are made from farro wheat or ‘spelt’ (an ancient forerunner to modern wheat), which contains considerably less gluten, and which the company claims may be suitable for people with a mild wheat intolerance.

For those looking for an organic alternative, Organico (www.organico.co.uk), one of the Ethical Company Organisation’s accredited brands, produce high quality organic pasta sourced from dedicated suppliers.

An alternative to expensive fresh pasta is to make your own by rolling out flour and water in the right quantities.



- La Terra e Cielo
- Organico
- Traidcraft



- Barilla
- Dellugo
- Fiorucci
- Marshalls
- Orgran
- Pastificio Rana
- Puglisi



- Buitoni
- Seeds of Change

PASTA BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS				PEOPLE				OTHER				Company group
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	POLITICAL DONATIONS	ARMAMENTS	FAIR TRADE	BOYCOTT	PUBLIC RECORD CRITICISMS	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX				
BARILLA	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	68	Barilla Holding SpA	
BUITONI	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	40	Nestlé	
DELLUGO	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	72	Ugo Foods Group	
FIORUCCI	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	56	Vestar Capital Partners	
LA TERRA E CIELO	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	80	Co-op Terra e Cielo	
MARSHALLS	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	Pasta Foods Ltd	
ORGANICO	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	88	Organico Realfoods Ltd	
ORGRAN	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	72	Buontempo Enterprises	
PASTIFICIO RANA	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	Pastificio Rana SpA	
PUGLISI	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	Puglisi Pasta UK Ltd	
SEEDS OF CHANGE	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	36	Mars	
TRADCRAFT	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	88	Traidcraft	

- Key
- Top rating
 - Middle rating
 - Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation

Soft drinks

Sweet, sugary fizzy drinks are loved by children – and more than a few adults too. We all know they’re unhealthy, but how many of us are aware of what actually goes into the average soft drink? Additives, preservatives and caffeine can be found in many of the most well known brands, all of which can be potentially harmful if consumed in excess. Pure fruit juices and smoothies are a good alternative.

SWEET AND DAMAGING

The average person consumes four pints of liquid each day. In the UK, around 20 per cent of this is in the form of soft drinks, with the volume slowly rising. High consumption of soft drinks means that other, healthier drinks are being replaced. Apart from the water, there is very little in soft drinks that is even vaguely beneficial.

Whether still or fizzy, off-the-shelf soft drinks can contain the equivalent of up to 15 cubes of sugar – well over half the recommended daily maximum. This can lead to dental cavities and other health problems associated with high intakes of sugar. The acids in many soft drinks (found in both ordinary and no-sugar varieties) can also cause tooth decay and erosion of the hard enamel on the surface of the tooth. Research has found that dental erosion as a result of drinking acidic drinks and other sources affects about 30 per cent of 13-year-olds. Even Ribena’s ‘tooth-kind’ drink failed dental tests carried out in two different studies.

All soft drinks given to children should be diluted to avoid tooth decay, given with meals if possible and in cups rather than bottles, as sipping drinks causes greater damage.

OTHER NASTIES

It’s not just the sugar in soft drinks which can cause health problems. Caffeine, found in many fizzy drinks in varying levels, is addictive and can cause hyperactivity, disrupted sleep and withdrawal symptoms in children and adults. In Glasgow, a survey found an unusually high level of orofacial granulomatosis – an oral version of Crohn’s disease, which has been linked to a sensitivity to preservatives and flavourings in carbonated soft drinks.

Research in the US has also found links between cola consumption and kidney stones in men. Artificial sweeteners – such as those found in many diet and no-sugar drinks – have also been linked to a number of health problems, although research has yet to prove any conclusive links.

CONFUSED IDENTITIES

Although the Libby's brand is no longer actually produced by Nestlé, it still owns the brand name. Hanover Acceptances' subsidiary, Gerber Foods – the new licensee of the brand – has an agreement with Nestlé for the Libby's name, and consequently Baby Milk Action still lists Libby's in its Nestlé boycott information, because Nestlé still profits from it. This licensing agreement also applies to other ex-Nestlé brands Um Bongo, Libby's C and Jusante. The Nestlé logo is now absent from all packaging, meaning that consumers may have been unwittingly buying Libby's brands believing them to be dissociated from the Nestlé empire.

PACKAGING

Soft drinks are likely to come in aluminium or steel, glass, plastic bottles or cartons.

The volume of packaging used each year is staggering. We use around 6 billion aluminium cans, 225 million plastic containers (mostly plastic bottles) and 6 billion glass containers annually. Less than a third of steel and aluminium cans and only 5 per cent of plastics are recycled in the UK, the remainder being landfilled or incinerated. Glass is the best option, as it can be recycled indefinitely.

SMOOTHIES

A relatively new addition to the soft drinks market are smoothies – juice drinks made from pure crushed fruit. Government guidelines say they can only count towards one portion of your 'five-a-day', regardless of how many pieces of fruit are used, but there can be no doubt that smoothies are still the healthy option. Try Innocent, who scored well in the research and have been accredited by the Ethical Company Organisation.

SOFT DRINKS BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS				PEOPLE				OTHER				Company group
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	G.M	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	POLITICAL DONATIONS	ARMAMENTS	FAIR TRADE	BOYCOTT	PUBLIC RECORD CRITICISMS	E.C.O. ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX				
BRITVIC	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	68	Britvic Plc	
COCA-COLA	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	32	Coca-Cola Company	
INNOCENT	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	80	Innocent Ltd	
IRN BRU	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	A.G. BARR Plc	
LIBBY'S	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	76	Gerber Juice Company Ltd	
PEPSI	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	56	PepsiCo	
PJ SMOOTHIE	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	56	PepsiCo	
PURDEY'S	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	Britvic Plc	
RIBENA	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	28	GlaxoSmithKline	
ROBINSONS	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	Britvic Plc	
SCHWEPES	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc	
SMOOTHIEPACK	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	The Juice Company	
SUNNY D	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	60	Sunny Delight Beverages Co.	
TROPICANA	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	56	PepsiCo	
VIMTO	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	Nichols Plc	
VIRGIN COLA	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	Virgin Group of Companies	
WHOLE EARTH COLA	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	80	Wessanen Group	

Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation (2008)

**GOOD SHOPPING GUIDE
ETHICAL COMPANY**

- Innocent
- Libby's
- Whole Earth Cola

?

- Britvic
- Irn Bru
- Purdey's
- Robinsons
- Schweppes
- Smoothiepack
- Sunny Delight
- Vimto
- Virgin Cola

X

- Coca-Cola
- Pepsi
- PJ Smoothie
- Ribena
- Tropicana