



Has Science Made our Food More Nutritious?

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I couldn't blame you if you answered "yes". That's certainly the impression that you'd get from strolling down the aisles of a modern supermarket where nearly every product seems to be bursting from its box or shrink-wrapped packaging it's so jam-packed with good things. Unfortunately, the truth is something quite different: our produce today is LESS nutritious than before WWII.

Here's a short history* of mineral depletion in food during the period 1940-1991

| Vegetables | Fruits |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ?Lost 76% of their copper | Lost 19% of their copper |
| ?Lost 49% of their sodium | Lost 29% of their sodium |
| ?Lost 46% of their calcium | Lost 16% of their calcium |
| ?Lost 27% of their iron | Lost 24% of their iron |
| ?Lost 24% of their mag | Lost 15% of their magnesium |
| ?Lost 16% of potassium | Lost 22% of potassium |

How's that for progress?

The source of the problem is also the source of the solution: the soil. Industrial agriculture sees the soil in the same way that a mining company sees a mine, i.e. that we can just keep digging and extracting what we want and once we've taken all the wealth from one piece of land there'll always be another one somewhere else we can exploit. What the weary overworked soils can no longer provide, we now add by "fortifying" our foods with vitamins and minerals.

The point of this is not to bum you out or make you start popping vitamin supplements, but to get you thinking about your own soil in a new and perhaps more appreciative way. The key is to move towards gardening and agricultural practices that are regenerative. By building soil fertility, we're improving our food quality and ultimately ourselves.

*David Thomas, Analysis of UK Composition of Foods 1940 ? 1991. Nutrition and Health 2003, Vol 17, pp. 85-115 from The Composition of Foods, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods and the Royal Society of Chemistry

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