



What's in your basket?

5 rules for grocery shopping in Canada

By Lisa Evans

When Ana Balovnedo immigrated to Canada from Belarus, she was both overwhelmed and excited by the food choices that met her at the supermarket. "Back home, fruits like bananas, oranges and grapes were considered exotic and definitely not something you'd eat every day. Seeing them so readily available and plentiful was shocking," she says.

Balovnedo indulged in fruit and other plentiful foods, gaining nearly 20 pounds in her first few months in Canada. "In Belarus, certain foods like hotdogs and deli meats were very expensive and not always available so [when we arrived in Canada] I begged my parents to buy me Schneiders hot dogs and I would eat an entire package in one sitting," she says.

Although Balovnedo was turned off by some North American foods like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches ("Is it a dessert or a sandwich?" she asks), she was fascinated with frozen TV dinners and the varieties of pop and chips that filled the cupboards of her Canadian-born friends' homes.

Julie Fung-Irving is a registered dietitian with the Black Creek Community Health Centre in Toronto and says while some newcomers like Balovnedo indulge in foods that seem exotic, others can become overwhelmed by the wide variety of unknown foods found in 200,000-square-foot supermarkets and simply don't know where to start.

Follow these five rules and ensure you adopt healthy eating habits in your new home.

1. Get to know your grocery store. Reading grocery store flyers can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed by showing you what's available in stores near you before walking in. Some superstores and community centres offer free store tours led by a registered dietitian.

2. Shop the perimeter of the store. The perimeter of the store is where fresh produce, meat and dairy are located. Fung-Irving recommends starting your grocery shop in the produce section. "There's definitely going to be some fruits and vegetables similar to what you had in your home country," she says. "When you get into the aisles, you're getting into the high processed foods." While these foods may be more convenient, they contain more salt, sugar and fat, and are often more expensive meals than ones cooked with fresh ingredients.

3. Buy organic, sometimes. While the word organic certainly sounds healthier, Fung-Irving says, "the nutritional value of organic and regular food is the same." The difference is that organic food

has been grown without pesticides that have been shown to cause health concerns. It also comes with a heavier price tag. You may think a higher price is worthwhile to alleviate health concerns, but be aware that not all organic produce is treated equal. To help consumers decide whether it's worth buying organic or not, the Environmental Working Group put out a list of the "dirty dozen" (foods that have the highest pesticide residue) and the "clean 15" (foods with the lowest pesticide residue).

- » Dirty dozen: Apples, blueberries, celery, cucumbers, grapes, lettuce, nectarines, peaches, potatoes, spinach, strawberries and sweet bell peppers.
- » Clean 15: Asparagus, avocado, cabbage, cantaloupe, sweet corn, eggplant, grapefruit, kiwi, mango, mushrooms, onion, pineapple, sweet peas, sweet potato and watermelon.

4. Beware GMOs. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are plants or animals created through gene-splicing technology. Genetically modified corn, soya and canola have become common in Canadian supermarkets. The problem is Canada doesn't yet have a labelling system for these foods despite the growing body of research connecting them to health concerns. Of course, the cheapest way to ensure your vegetables are GMO-free and organic is to grow them in your own backyard or get involved in a community garden.

5. Read labels. Nutrition labels help consumers make smart choices. Although labels can contain up to 15 nutrients, Fung-Irving recommends examining three when comparing products: sugar, salt and fat. Labels include a portion size telling you how much of the product is being measured and then it lists the nutrients followed by number in grams or milligrams and a percentage. The percentage is the proportion of the daily recommended intake of that nutrient. Fung-Irving says the percentage of fat, sugar and salt should be less than five per cent. "Anything over 15 per cent should be avoided," she says. 🌟



**Recent immigrant?
Skilled professional?
Looking for work in your field?**

The InfoCentre offers free help with:

- Consultation to identify employment opportunities.
- Customized job search information.
- Recommendations on immigrant services, employment centres, and professional organizations.

Vancouver Public Library Central Library 350 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, BC
604-331-3624
skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca





Vancouver Public Library The Best Place on Earth Funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program



BACK in MOTION | Skills Connect for Immigrants Program

Are you an IMMIGRANT looking for work?

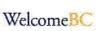
Our Skills Connect for Immigrants Program:

- connects your skills with B.C. Employers in all job sectors
- provides mentorship opportunities and one-on-one coaching
- helps you plan your career, access job leads, upgrade your skills and earn Canadian credentials




Call Today: 604.575.3800
Toll Free: 1.877.277.4832
www.skillsconnect.ca





The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program is part of the WelcomeBC umbrella of services, made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.