New York, NY. The widespread belief that organic and so-called "natural foods" are safer than conventional ones is simply not true.

Scientists with the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) point out that the foods that make up a traditional holiday dinner are loaded with "carcinogens": chemicals that in large doses cause cancer in laboratory animals. None of these chemicals are man-made or added to the foods. These "carcinogens" occur naturally in foods.

But ACSH scientists have good news: these natural carcinogens, like their synthetic counterparts, pose no hazard to human health -- because we are exposed to such low levels, and because we are not the same as lab animals.

Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, president of ACSH, notes, “Americans are still constantly bombarded with dire warnings that synthetic chemicals have untoward, if not downright deadly effects on our health.” She continues, “We’re also told that so-called natural or organic foods are better for us than those containing any synthetic ingredients or produced by conventional means.”

ACSH’s Holiday Dinner Menu highlights the chemicals -- and the carcinogens -- that Mother Nature herself has put in our food. These natural carcinogens, like synthetic chemicals, have been shown to cause cancer only in very high doses, given over a lifetime to lab animals. They are present in such small amounts in our foods that they do not endanger consumers.

This fact hasn't dampened the ardor of self-styled consumer activists, who "warn" consumers about the supposed dangers of acrylamide, for example, which is produced when foods high in carbohydrates are cooked at high temperatures. "Acrylamide, like the majority of the other rodent carcinogens listed in the menu, has never been shown to be a human carcinogen," observes ACSH nutrition director Dr. Ruth Kava.

No component of the traditional holiday meal is devoid of animal carcinogens (defined here as substances that at high doses cause cancer in laboratory animals), including:

- hydrazines (mushroom soup)
- aniline, caffeic acid, benzaldehyde, hydrogen peroxide, quercetin glycosides, and psoralens (vegetable salad)
- heterocyclic amines, acrylamide, benzo(a)pyrene, ethyl carbamate, dihydrazines, d-limonene, safrole, and quercetin glycosides (roast turkey with stuffing)
- benzene and heterocyclic amines (prime rib of beef with parsley sauce)
• furfural, ethyl alcohol, allyl isothiocyanate (broccoli, potatoes, sweet potatoes)
• coumarin, methyl eugenol, acetaldehyde, estragole, and safrole (apple and pumpkin pies)
• ethyl alcohol with ethyl carbamate (red and white wines)

Then sit back and relax with some benzofuran, caffeic acid, catechol, 1,2,5,6,-dibenz(a)anthracene with 4-methylcatechol (coffee).

And those -- all produced courtesy of Mother Nature -- are only the carcinogens. Your 100% natural holiday meal is also replete with toxins. These include the solanine, arsenic, and chaconine in potatoes, the hydrogen cyanide in lima beans, and the hallucinogenic compound myristicin found in nutmeg, black pepper, and carrots.

Rest easy, though, because virtually none of the compounds on ACSH's list are established human carcinogens, and, as the Holiday Dinner Menu [1] demonstrates, we would have to eat enormous amounts of these foods over long periods of time before we could ever expect them to cause cancer.

The same is true of the majority of the food additives that are now considered to be "carcinogenic" based exclusively on animal experiments, notes ACSH.

Dr. Whelan has also explained the Menu -- and its lesson about common but harmless carcinogens -- in a short video message, with a normal-quality version [2] for general viewers and a downloadable high-quality version [3] for interested media to use.

The American Council on Science and Health, a non-profit organization dedicated to putting health risks in perspective, with over 300 science and medical advisors, urges consumers to pay attention to realistic concerns about our foods. The greatest health threats from our foods are (1) eating too much of them -- enough to cause obesity with its accompanying illnesses -- and (2) microbiological contamination. So enjoy your holiday foods in moderation, with appropriate sanitary precautions -- without worrying about the supposedly deadly chemicals they contain.

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[3] https://www.yousendit.com/download/TTZuTkF1K3h5Ukh2Wmc9PQ