



Consumer Focus

► compiled by **Linda Robbins**, assistant editor

Debunk food myths at Best Food Facts

Is organic beef better for me? Are genetically modified foods harmful? Are antibiotics overused in food animals? Is there aspartame in my milk?

Seeking information

Consumers seeking answers to questions about today's food will find them at www.BestFoodFacts.org, a website featuring more than 150 university-based food-system experts who serve up credible, balanced and unbiased information.

Created by The Center for Food Integrity (CFI), a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to build consumer trust and confidence in today's food system, Best Food Facts features expert blogs and videos on topics that run the gamut and help consumers sort fact from fiction.

"Just like the popular Snopes site that debunks myths, rumors and urban legend, Best Food Facts experts tackle food-related topics and determine whether they're true, false or somewhere in between," said Roxi Beck, manager of Best Food Facts.

CFI began working with experts in 2010 and officially launched the Best Food Facts website in 2011. In the last four years, Beck says, CFI has built a database of more than 170 experts from universities across the United States, Canada, and even a couple from outside North America. Based on questions received on the website, food topics in popular media or developing food trends, CFI reaches out to experts who are focused on that topic.

When a topic requires a new expert, Beck says CFI looks to universities that offer expertise on that subject matter, and either call the

communications department or the head of that department to get access to experts. From there, they conduct an interview with the expert(s), and they are responsible for approving all information before it is posted to Best Food Facts.

Anyone can submit questions and receive expert responses within as little as 24 hours. Additionally, site visitors can take part in and instantly review results of Food Fight polls, such as

- "What color are your favorite fruits and vegetables?"
- "How do you define 'local' food?"
- "Do you think GM (genetically modified) food should be labeled?"

So far, there have been 54 Food Fight polls, Beck reports. Experts also analyze questions and myths and provide facts to cut through the clutter:

- True or not? "Regular use of antibiotics in healthy cows, pigs and chickens has led to increased antibiotic resistance in humans eating meat products."
- Food expiration dates — What do they mean?
- Are fruits and vegetables sprayed with pesticides less safe than organic produce?
- Should I avoid gluten?
- Are fresh fruits and vegetables better than canned or frozen produce?
- Why are chemicals used in poultry processing?

New expert

New to Best Food Facts is Carolyn O'Neil, registered dietitian, award-winning author, former CNN correspondent, and featured expert on Alton Brown's hit program *Good Eats* on the Food Network. O'Neil is featured in Best Food Facts' video series *Consuming Evidence*, where Carolyn plays super sleuth to bust common food myths, and *Eat Better for Life*, focused on healthy eating.

"As a registered dietitian and journalist

who's been reporting on food and nutrition for more than 20 years, I really do believe that the more you know, the more you can eat," said O'Neil. "People associate nutrition with all of the things you're not supposed to eat, but it's about the beautiful nutrition and taste of the foods you should be adding, not eliminating, that can make a big difference in improving your health."

Consumers can submit questions for the experts at www.BestFoodFacts.org or call toll-free at 1-855-567-3663.



Editor's Note: This article includes information provided by The Center for Food Integrity.



Carolyn O'Neil

A nonprofit organization

The Center for Food Integrity (CFI) is a nonprofit organization, established in 2007, whose mission is "To build consumer trust and confidence in the contemporary U.S. food system by sharing accurate, balanced information, correcting misinformation, modeling best practices and engaging stakeholders to address issues that are important to consumers."

CFI does not lobby or advocate for individual food companies or brands. Its operating budget is provided through annual membership fees.

For more information about CFI visit www.centerforfoodintegrity.org.