

**DID YOU KNOW** that mainstream nutritionists often claim that conventional produce is no different than organic produce? But a new study recently published in the online, peer-reviewed journal *Public Library of Science (PLoS)* *one* proves otherwise, revealing that organic fruits and vegetables pack a greater nutritional punch and produce better, healthier soil than their conventional counterparts. John Reganold, professor of soil science at Washington State University Regents and author of the new study, and his colleagues conducted the most comprehensive analysis of its kind on commercial produce soil and the strawberries that grow in it. (Conventional strawberries, as many now know, are one of the most pesticide-laden fruits available for sale.) Reganold and his team analyzed 31 different chemical and biological soil properties--including soil DNA--and performed tests on the quality, nutritional value and taste of 26 different strawberries from both conventional and organic fields. And what they found is truly astounding. Organic strawberries contain far more antioxidants, vitamin C and beneficial polyphenolic compounds than conventional strawberries, and they have a longer shelf life. Organic strawberries also contain more dry matter per volume--meaning more actual strawberry--than conventional ones do. In an unbiased taste test, samplers indicated that organic strawberries taste better overall, both in terms of sweetness and general strawberry flavor. And when viewed side-by-side, organic strawberries are more visually appealing. But it does not stop there. In soil tests, organic soils tested extremely rich in key nutrients, enzymes and biological and chemical elements, that are otherwise lacking in conventional fields. Such soil nutrients are vital for producing nutritionally-rich fruit, as well as for maintaining healthy soil conditions that preserve and promote environmental integrity. The study also revealed that organic produce can be raised with the same--or better--yields as conventional produce, but without all the harmful chemicals and pesticides that destroy both human health and the environment. (*NaturalNews*)

**DID YOU KNOW** about the benefits of olive oil? It's one of the more healthful oils to cook with, which is why I recommend it as a key ingredient to a healthy lifestyle. There are many varieties, from regular to virgin to extra-virgin. The best one really depends on your taste buds and budget. Extra virgin is the most expensive and highest-quality olive oil. To qualify as extra-virgin, the olives must be handpicked at the optimum ripeness, giving the oil a rich flavor. When a bottle is labeled just olive oil, it contains some imperfections, lacks some of the rich flavor of extra-virgin and costs less. Virgin olive oil falls somewhere between extra-virgin and plain when it comes to taste and quality. And take caution: Light olive oil is *not* light in calories, but light in taste and appearance. It's designed for people who want to use olive oil but don't like its strong taste. Here's another reason to love olive oil: Studies have shown it may reduce cancer risk, lower blood sugar levels and improve heart health. Don't miss out on the benefits of this wonderful cooking ingredient! (*LifeScript*)