



MOTHER NATURE

Driven by her dislike of toxins in skincare products, Narelle Chenery started making her own organic products, some with ingredients found in her own garden. Today, the 36-year-old is the founder of Misessence. Established in 2001, her products were one of the earliest certified organic products in the world. **text ADLENA WONG**

How did your organic obsession begin?

I was selling another brand of products, and I believed their marketing that the products were natural and organic. One day, a cosmetic ingredient guidebook “jumped out” at me as I was browsing through a health food store. The guide gave a list of dangerous properties of the ingredients in the products I was using. Yuck! I was disillusioned and, frankly, quite

annoyed! My mother-in-law gave me some books on aromatherapy, herbal remedies and how to make your own skincare out of natural ingredients.

So, your mother-in-law inspired it all? Yes, then I started experimenting with some skin creams and giving them away as gifts. Eighteen months later, Alf Orpen (former director of Biological Farmers of Australia, a cooperative of organic farmers) approached me at a natural products expo, where I had a stall, and encouraged me to create certified organic products. I have been eating organic since my first pregnancy in 1994, and I believed wholeheartedly in the organic philosophy. Today, I’m a mother to healthy and happy five, nine and 11-year-olds.

What are some things people can look out for when buying organic products? **1** ▶ If you want the real deal, look for the organic logo. If it’s just a mention with no evidence of the logo, then it’s a marketing gimmick. An independent certifying body I know is the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In Australia (Ed’s note: It is the standard also used in Singapore by proximity), both Australian Certified Organic and National Association for Sustainable Agriculture labels are common.

2 ▶ If you see any ingredient with a bracket following it, containing a word you’re not able to pronounce, then don’t buy it. Chances are the company producing it is simply insinuating that the ingredient is natural.

3 ▶ Avoid products with perfumes. Fragrance is the No 1 cause of allergic reactions. Use organic essential oils instead; they have a range of benefits – from anti-ageing to anti-bacterial. Not all essential oils are organic, so the same applies – look for the logo.

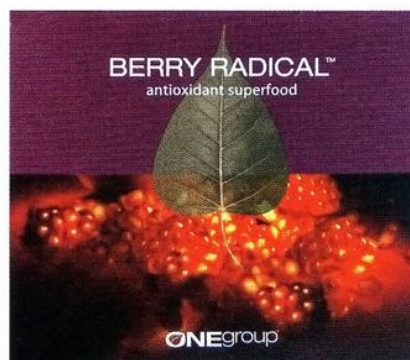
Why does it seem so hard to get the message across that organic is good? Definitely cost is a huge factor. Some of our raw materials cost A\$14,000 (S\$17,726) a kilo. For us to have the same margins as a big company, we probably would have to sell our products for A\$500 (S\$633) to even A\$1,000 (S\$1,266)!

What are some of the top reasons to eat organic?

1 ▶ Cutting your cancer risk: Organic food has one-third more cancer-fighting nutrients than normal produce.

2 ▶ Protect your child’s health. For example, organic milk products result in less eczema in babies; food additives have been linked to asthma, headaches, allergic reaction and hyperactivity in children.

3 ▶ Save the earth. Conventional agriculture is the second highest contributor of greenhouse gases. 🌱



Misessence organic products are available at #01-04 Camden Medical Centre, 1 Orchard Boulevard. Call 6887-3456 for details.