Uh-oh, Spaghetti-O!
Part 1: Basil Preparations

Purpose of Activity: To learn what it means to be organic and its importance.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes:
By actively participating in this activity, participants will:

- Learn what “organic” really means.
- Learn how to plant and care for edibles.

Materials Needed:

- Enough plastic bottles for everyone in attendance
  - Put up a collection spot in your wing or hall. Do not use new bottles
- Decorations
  - Option 1: paint, brushes, newspaper, glitter, baubles, etc. (whatever you can find in the staff office)
  - Option 2: address/shipping labels (preferably 100% recycled content) and markers. This option is significantly less messy. You will need between 2 and 4 labels per attendee, depending on the size of the labels
- Soil - Approximately 1 cup per attendee
  - MUST be organic
  - I recommend a local business on 4th Ave: Sea of Green
- Seeds - about ten per attendee (they are very small)
  - I recommend purchasing from Native Seeds (a local nonprofit conservation seed bank), located on Campbell Ave

Facilitation Guide:

- Distribute bottles and evenly disperse decorating materials.
- Have residents fill each bottle with soil to about 2.5 inches below the rim of the bottle, about 1 cup depending on where it was cut.
- Inform residents that you are going to be planting basil.
- Give residents about 10 seeds to plant in their bottle. They should be planted near the top. It is recommended that you sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil then basically scratch them in. They should be no farther than a half inch down.
- Using a pair of scissors, poke 1 or 2 small slits in the bottom of the bottle for drainage. Herbs don’t like to sit in water. Since you will only be keeping the soil moist, there should not be drainage. However, we recommend you keep a towel (could be paper) underneath just in case.
- Care instructions will be shared at the end of the program.
Discussion Questions:
- We will give these plants some time to grow, then next semester we will make spaghetti as a group and add our basil to the sauce.
- We are using organic soil, native Arizona seeds, and recycled bottles (and labels if appropriate)—a very sustainable endeavor.
- Let’s talk a little about eating organic.

I. Organic Defined

Pose the question: “Who knows what I mean when I say that food is “organic?” How would you define it?”

The USDA (the US Department of Agriculture) officially defines organic food as:
- Produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations.
- Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones.
- Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation.
- Before a product can be labeled "organic," a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too.

II. Benefits to the Environment

Plain and simple, the impact on the earth and the environment is lower with organic foods

Pose the question: “does anyone know why?”

According to IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, five environmental benefits of organic farming include:
FAST FACTS

1) Less runoff of synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers into the water table—leading to less pollution of rivers, oceans, and even our drinking water. Also leads to less acid rain

2) Enhances (not degrades) soil structures so land can be used again and again—Conventional farmers often burn their fields to enrich the soil. Organic farmers rarely have to burn their fields, because their soil stays rich in content, moisture, and nutrients due to careful management of land and using only natural organic matter to cultivate and grow their crops

3) Can conserves water—Cornell University research found that organic farms conserve more water in the soil. So, less water is needed to continually feed the plants

4) Mitigates climate change—organic farming emits much lower levels of Greenhouse gasses (the cause of global warming) and quickly, affordably, and effectively sequesters carbon in the soil
   a. Some estimate that agriculture is directly responsible for about 14% of man-made greenhouse gas emissions
   b. However, according to Cornell University research, organic farming approaches for major crops like corn use an average 30% less fossil energy
   c. Rodale Institute claims: If only 10,000 medium sized farms in the U.S. converted to organic production, they would store so much carbon in the soil that it would be equivalent to taking 1,174,400 cars off the road, or reducing car miles driven by 14.62 billion miles

5) Uses less waste—including things like hard to dispose of pesticide containers

III. Why Does Organic Cost More?

The truth of the matter is that organic food doesn't always cost more. When the cost is higher, consider these facts:

- Organic farmers don't receive federal subsidies like conventional farmers do. Therefore, the price of organic food reflects the true cost of growing
- The price of conventional food does not reflect the cost of environmental cleanups that we pay for through our tax dollars
- Organic farming is more labor and management intensive
- Organic farms are usually smaller than conventional farms and so do not benefit from the economies of scale that larger growers get

IV. Organic vs. Natural
THE USDA ORGANIC SEAL AND “NATURAL” LABELED FOODS ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT.

There are no regulating standards for claiming a food or product is “natural”. This is often “greenwashing”

Greenwashing- a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization's aims, policies, or products are environmentally friendly.

V. Wrap-up

Some final thoughts:

1) Where are some places you can buy organic foods on campus?
   a. Cellar Bistro- the most organic and sustainable options on campus
   b. Core
   c. Feul
   d. Even Highland Market and U-Mart have some organic options

2) The big thing to remember is this—organic food is better for the environment.

3) You are now going to grow some of your own organic food right in your room (though it is not certified as such...you are make a good faith effort).

4) Care instructions include:
   a. Bottles should be kept in as much sunlight as possible. If you have your blinds down, put them on the outside of your blinds so they soak up the sun. Sun is important to basil especially. If your room does not get a lot of direct sunlight, it may be harder for your plant to be successful, unfortunately. It can still happen, though, so don’t give up!
   b. You have been given about 10 seeds in hopes that at least some will take root. If you start getting several plants in this small bottle, you will need to trim out some of the plants when they get to big. Realistically, only one sizeable basil plant can fit in a container this big.
   c. Keep the soil moist, but moist only. You do not want to over water basil! When it gets dry will depend on how much light your room is getting. Keep an eye on it until you figure out about how often it needs to be watered.
   d. DO NOT OVER WATER! Not only will it kill your plant, it will make a mess since there are holes in the bottom of your bottle.
   e. Remember—moist to the touch, but not wet!
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3+ People

25-40 Minutes

$10 - $20

Low Risk