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Brands under the microscope: "Creative Gourmet", "Woolworths Select", "Nanna's" and "Coles Fresh Frozen" products.

A recent story aired by "Today Tonight" revealed we might be getting more than we bargained for when it comes to our favourite brand of frozen mixed berries.

The findings? The following brands were found to contain traces of a number of fungicides and pesticides, some of which are banned here in Australia for agricultural use due to their carcinogenic (cancer causing) effects on the human body.

- Creative Gourmet berries were found to contain [Carbaryl](#)- "Carbaryl is a cholinesterase inhibitor and is toxic to humans". It is classified as a likely human carcinogen by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA.)
- Select Mixed berries were found to contain the chemical Pyraclostrobin- a suspected carcinogen. Select Raspberries were found to contain Iprodione which is considered a "likely" human carcinogen based on evidence of tumors in both sexes of mouse (liver) and in the male rat.
- Coles Raspberries were found to have traces of Difenconazole - a suspected carcinogen and endocrine disruptor.
- These fungicides are considered toxic to humans.

So how did these chemicals make their way into our food chain? Most of these berries are imported. As an example, Creative Gourmet import their berries from a variety of countries including Chile, Serbia, China and Poland. Why? The report interviewed an Australian farmer who said they just can't compete with the low costs from overseas.

In a separate report, a selection of peaches and berries that were imported from Chile were found to contain traces of DDT. DDT is one of the most dangerous pesticides that has ever been used on our food supply and as a result, has been banned in Australia for many years. DDT has been linked to the following:

- This chemical is likely to cause cancer.
- Reproductive effects have been observed in animals, including early onset of puberty in females, infertility, and sex reversal (fish).
- High DDE levels in mothers' blood may also increase the likelihood of preterm birth and low birth weight.
- Changes in the normal levels of thyroid hormone.
- Chronic effects on liver, kidney, and nervous system (in laboratory animals).
- Laboratory tests of animals have shown evidence of birth defects (abnormal tail development) and other developmental effects (impaired learning in maze tests)

If you can find the spare coins, berries should always be organic varieties or pesticide free. Their soft permeable surface enables them to absorb high quantities of pesticides. If you can't afford organic, choose Australian producers in order to ensure you aren't ingesting any chemicals that are not permitted for use here in Australia.

In response to our facebook follower's questions:

- Nanna's berries were not on the TT "black list" however, all of the berries sold by Nanna's are imported from China. DDT has been identified in a number of instances across China.
- McCain also imports all of their berries from Chile and parts of China. Sara Lee also uses imported as per the information listed on their product packaging.
- Only 5% of produce imported into Australia is subject to safety testing
- Unfortunately contamination issues don't end here, a number of frozen produce is imported from China and other parts of the world. Woolworths recently pulled their Select Whole Green Beans from the shelves due to chemical contamination. My only advice is to buy local, fresh, seasonal and organic where possible.
- I have posted a number of alternatives to these imported brands. This is available on our facebook page - www.facebook.com/anappleaday00

Also read:

NEW INFORMATION: At the time this story was released, Coles were conducting their own investigations.

Woolworth's have since commented below stating they withdrew the berries from sale and have since established a new source.

Patties, owners of Creative Gourmet and Nanna's berries have since emailed me and advised that they have "significantly increased independent testing to ensure their products continue to comply with all Australian Food Standards". Patties also offer 'Creative Gourmet Organic Berries' for concerned customers.

Grace's addition: The above article was authored in February 2012! In the light of the current Hepatitis A issues with Patties imported berries – I suggest you – the consumer write to Patties and anyone else whose imported produce you regularly consume and get answers.

Better still make attempts to buy locally, Australian produced foods. Shop at Farmers markets for great tasting quality produce; but always wash & dry your produce well before storing in the fridge – even if it is from a farmers market.

I wash all fruit and vegetables in the kitchen sink under running tap water then a dip into a bowl of vinegar and water. (read more on my [gracegawlermedia](#) blog about this).

<http://www.mysupernanny.com.au/blog/article/226-do-you-know-what-is-in-your-frozen-berries>