

# What's In Your Wallet?

BY CLARE LESCHIN-HOAR

I don't know about you, but lately I'm finding my wallet is getting harder to snap shut. Unfortunately, the sputtering economy has ensured that my problem is not being caused by a billfold that's stuffed with cash. Rather, it's bloated from the variety of wallet cards being issued by organizations with a food agenda. Whether I'm pondering the amount of pesticide on the conventional strawberries at the supermarket, or sipping sake while placing my sushi order, there's a wallet guide ready to help steer me towards a better choice both for my health and the environment. Here's a look at what's good and not-so-good about several:

## MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM'S SEAFOOD WATCH GUIDES

[www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org)

Pros: Hands down — our favorite of the bunch. First issued in 1999, the Seafood Watch Sustainable Seafood Guides are available by region, and are updated twice a year. Their newly launched sushi guide provides the Japanese names you'll most likely encounter at the sushi bar. The consistent and clean design of both guides means they're simple to use, and the website gives you the option of either downloading the guide immediately or ordering the slicker printed version.

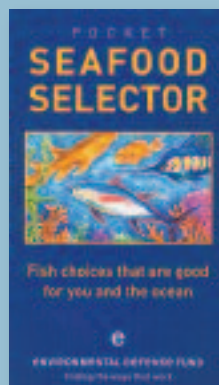


Cons: A species like mackerel is found on the "best choices" list even though it may have health warnings associated with it. In this case, the guide does place an asterisk next to the listing.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND'S GUIDES

[www.environmentaldefensefund.org](http://www.environmentaldefensefund.org)

Pros: Like the two organizations above, these guides come in general seafood or sushi-specific versions, and are broken down into "best", "ok" and "worst" choices. EDF boasts they're the only one with environmental health expertise on staff. Fish high in mercury or PCBs are only listed under the OK- or worst-choices sections. While they don't offer instant text messaging, their website is optimized for viewing on a mobile device.



Cons: Printing the downloadable version used up a lot of our ink and left black smudges on our fingertips when we went to use the guides.

## BLUE OCEAN INSTITUTE'S GUIDES

[www.blueocean.org](http://www.blueocean.org)

Pros: Carl Safina and Mercedes Lee were the first to pioneer the use of wallet cards in 1998 to rank species on an ocean-friendly scale. Both the seafood and sushi guides are heavy on the explanations. So if you want to know the "why" behind a fish's appearance on the list, these guides are right for you. Forgot your wallet (and guide) at home? No need to fret, BOI has a text message option too, and rumor has it they're working on a downloadable iPhone application.

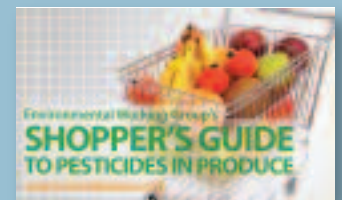


Cons: The printable versions aren't easy to find on the group's website and are not all that wallet-friendly once you get them folded accordion style — that, or we did it wrong.

## ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP'S PESTICIDES IN PRODUCE GUIDE

[www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)

Pros: Not sure if the organic selection of the produce you're eyeing is worth the price? This tiny guide divides fruits and vegetables into the 12 "cleanest" and "dirtiest" by amount of pesticide contamination. First launched in 1995, this list is updated approximately every other year, and is downloadable on the group's website. No folding necessary.



Cons: This is a very simplistic guide, which often left us with more questions than answers. Does lettuce mean leafy green, iceberg or arugula? And why exactly would frozen sweet corn or peas have fewer pesticides than fresh?

## HARVARD CENTER FOR HEALTH AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT'S HEALTH HARVEST GUIDE

[www.healthyharvest.org](http://www.healthyharvest.org)

Pros: The goal of this guide is to take a regional, rather than state-by-state look at what's fresh each month, and includes items that do well in storage — which explains why apples, potatoes and squash are still listed in snowy winter months. Newly launched in 2008, the guide is easily downloadable or you can request a printed pocket guide through their website.



Cons: Right now, it's only available in two versions: New England and mid-Atlantic. And we're not sure we really need a produce pocket guide to remind us the pickins are slim in April and robust in September.

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Clare Leschin-Hoar is online shopping for a bigger wallet. Her work can be seen at [www.leschin-hoar.com](http://www.leschin-hoar.com).