

As organic foods have risen in popularity, so-called artisanal foods like raw organic cheese and milk are also undergoing a renaissance. More and more people are recognizing that the industrialization of our food system has dramatically reduced the quality of our food.

Not only are foodborne diseases most commonly linked to processed food there's also the issue of toxic exposures from herbicides and pesticides. Organic and sustainably grown foods are safer in both regards, and they can be more nutrient-dense as well.

This is particularly true for raw milk, as pasteurization destroys many valuable nutrients and enzymes in the milk. Cows raised in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) also tend to be less healthy due to crowded and unsanitary living conditions, which reflects on the milk they produce. Both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warn that raw milk can carry disease-causing bacteria — completely ignoring and overlooking the fact that these bacteria are the result of *industrial farming practices* that lead to diseased animals.

It is important to understand that in order for raw milk to be healthy and safe it *must* come from healthy organically raised cows that graze on pasture. That sounds like all the dairies in Humboldt County. Drinking unpasteurized milk from cows raised in a containment animal feeding operation can be extremely dangerous and is not recommended under any circumstance.

An investigation by Mark McAfee, CEO of Organic Pastures Dairy, which included a Freedom of Information Request to the CDC for data on deaths claimed to be related to raw milk revealed that there have been no reported deaths from raw milk in California and the two deaths the CDC lists as being related to raw milk were actually due to illegal Mexican bathtub cheese, and not raw milk produced in the U.S.

According to an excellent article in Wise Traditions by Humboldt County freelance writer Cindy Ashy, Humboldt County residents want access to raw milk for health and other reasons and are also angry about the fact that a basic freedom, held by most Californians, has been taken away by an outdated county ordinance. There are also dairies both cow and goat who would like to become certified raw producers.

As my wife stated to the board several years ago "stop trying to protect me from myself. I'm a big girl and I can make my own decisions. Why would you want to continue standing in the way of your health conscious constituents who simply want to legally drink milk of their choice? Some decisions are hard. This one is a no brainer. Rescind the ordinance and move on." And she isn't even a raw milk drinker, I am.