What’s so unnatural about GM foods?

Chipotle hit the headlines last week when the company announced it would no longer serve customers genetically modified foods.

Yet recent research drives home how misled alarmists are about genetically modified food. All human beings, two Cambridge University scientists have established, are genetically modified, including Chipotle’s customers. Over the years, hundreds of foreign genes have jumped into human DNA through a natural phenomenon called “gene flow.”

If humans can safely accept alien genes without mishap, why not food, too?

Farmers and breeders have for centuries used cross-breeding to improve the genetic characteristics of crops and animals. Because this process involves gene transfers within the same species, environmental advocates label it “natural” — even though cross-breeding is clearly man-made. Modern genetic splicing makes it possible to combine genes from completely different species to produce much-needed products, including pest-resistant and high-yielding crops.

When fears about genetically modified foods first arose, little was known about gene flow, also called horizontal gene transfer. The idea that genes could jump across species violated then-conventional wisdom. But scientific research has established that natural gene transfers regularly occur. So genetic transfers are not a human invention — just a belated human effort to imitate what nature has been doing all along.

So, why should Chipotle even make the claim when its own customers are genetically modified?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: If you don’t want your food genetically modified, tell nature to stop it.