



Alternative SWEETENERS

Confused by all the alternative sweetener options on the market?

WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!

I like to look at sugars in three categories: artificial sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and natural sweeteners. While this ebook will mainly focus on natural sweeteners, I think it is important to do a quick overview of all three!

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

Zero-Calorie artificial sweeteners like Splenda, Sweet N'Low, Aspartame (brand names Equal and Nutrasweet) contain chemicals that can be poisonous to the human body. I don't recommend consuming these in any amount.



SUGAR ALCOHOLS

Sugar alcohols are derived from natural sources but can be aggravating to some people's digestive systems. I recommend avoiding them if possible.

SUGAR ALCOHOLS:

- Isomalt
- Malitol
- Xylitol
- Sorbitol
- Erythritol

NATURAL SWEETENERS



Sweeteners in this category range from plain granulated, white sugar to honey and maple syrup. To be honest, many natural sweeteners such as honey or coconut sugar have the same nutritional impact on the body as white sugar, but are less processed and far better choices than artificial sweeteners.

The key to consuming sugar and maintaining health is to limit the amount of sugar you are eating limited. Just because pure maple syrup is a natural, less-refined sugar doesn't mean you should be eating it in unlimited quantities! A single serving of white sugar (for example, in a reasonably sized grain-free cookie) will likely pose a much more minor threat to health, whereas several servings (three or more) can trigger a blood sugar imbalance.

NATURAL SWEETENERS

Breakdown

In the following pages you'll find our breakdown on natural sweetener options!

MONK FRUIT

Monk fruit is also known as Lo Han Guo and comes from a Chinese fruit that is from 100-200 times sweeter than normal sugar.

PROS

Monk fruit is a zero calorie sweetener that is naturally derived from fruit and typically less chemically processed than stevia. Because this sweetener is zero calorie, it will not spike your blood sugar the way that granulated white sugar typically will.

Additionally, monk fruit contains powerful antioxidants called mogrosides, and there are no known negative side effects to consuming monk fruit.

CONS

Monk fruit is often combined with dextrose or erythritol to tone down its extreme sweetness, but this may decrease the health benefits of monk fruit. You can check online or at your local Chinese grocery for pure monk fruit powder.

Also, as with all sweeteners, consuming highly sweetened foods may still encourage daily sugar cravings. Additionally, consuming zero-calorie sweeteners can trick the body into preparing for something sweet. As soon as you eat something sweet a signal is sent to the brain which triggers the body to make insulin, which takes the sugar into cells to be used or stored, to prepare for the incoming sugar. Ultimately, no sugar arrives, leaving us with excess insulin.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 1 teaspoon

CALORIES: 0

CARBOHYDRATES: 0g

DIETARY FIBER: 0g

SUGAR: 0g

STEVIA

Stevia has grown significantly in popularity in past years. It is a zero-calorie sweetener that comes from the leaf of the plant *stevia rebaudiana*, which is naturally somewhere from 250-350 times sweeter than white sugar.

PROS

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CONS

The biggest con to stevia is that much of the stevia on the market is highly processed into powder and liquid forms and mixed with cornstarch, maltodextrin, and sugar alcohols like erythritol that can cause digestive upset in some people.

If you are choosing to use stevia as your preferred form of sweetener, be sure to seek out the purest form you can find – as close to the whole leaf as possible!

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 1 teaspoon

CALORIES: 0

CARBOHYDRATES: 0g

DIETARY FIBER: 0g

SUGAR: 0g

LUCUMA

Lucuma is an orange-yellow fleshed Peruvian fruit with a sweet, caramel-like taste. It is referred to as the “Gold of the Incas” by Peruvians and has been a cherished fruit for many centuries. Lucuma is the most popular ice cream flavor in Peru, and can also be found in juice and powder forms to be used as a sweetener.

PROS

Lucuma is very low on the glycemic index, so you can enjoy the sweetener without the added blood sugar spike. The dried fruit powder is also rich in trace minerals, B-Vitamins, beta carotene, and fiber. Lucuma has been used for centuries, and its caramel-like flavor makes it a great replacement for brown sugar.

CONS

Lucuma is not as sweet as regular sugar, honey, or stevia, so you may not be able to sweeten things to your liking without adding an additional sweetener.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 2 teaspoon

CALORIES: 20

CARBOHYDRATES: 4g

DIETARY FIBER: 2g

SUGAR: 1g

COCONUT NECTAR & SUGAR

Coconut nectar comes from the sap of the coconut tree and is a raw, pure sweetener option that maintains its trace minerals. Coconut sugar is made from evaporated coconut sap.

PROS

Coconut sugar and nectar are both lower on the glycemic index than white sugar, so they won't have as big of an impact on blood sugar. Both contain potassium, fiber, iron, magnesium and trace minerals. Coconut nectar also contains inulin, a prebiotic fiber that feeds the good bacteria in your gut and supports good immune and gut health

CONS

Though lower on the glycemic index, coconut nectar can still contribute to insulin spikes and is best used in moderation. Also, it is important to do research into your brand of coconut nectar and sugar, as some brands can be more highly processed than others.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 1 teaspoon

CALORIES: 55

CARBOHYDRATES: 13g

DIETARY FIBER: 0g

SUGAR: 13g

DATE SYRUP

Date syrup is made from cooked down dates and has a unique, complex flavor. Date syrup is sweeter than typical table sugar, so only 75% as much is needed in recipes.

PROS

Date syrup is made from one ingredient – dates – and is not typically highly processed. Date syrup is also lower on the glycemic index than white sugar, and rich in dietary potassium, fiber, iron, magnesium, and trace minerals.

CONS

Date Molasses contains less of the fiber present in whole dates that helps to slow absorption of glucose and decrease blood sugar spikes. This is why whole dates are the preferred sweetener for the Fed & Fit Project. Also, even though dates are an all-natural fruit, they are still fairly high in sugar and should be used in moderation.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 1 teaspoon

CALORIES: 54

CARBOHYDRATES: 13g

DIETARY FIBER: 0g

SUGAR: 13g

BROWN RICE SYRUP

Brown rice syrup is a sweetener derived from brown rice that is 100% glucose with no fructose. Though brown rice syrup is promoted as a healthy sweetener alternative, it is actually worse than white sugar in many ways.

PROS

The syrup is naturally derived from brown rice. It can also be a good alternative for those looking to avoid fructose due to intolerance, as this sweetener is fructose-free.

CONS

Brown rice syrup is higher on the glycemic index than white sugar, which may lead to significant blood sugar spikes. Also on the downside, the way that the brown rice syrup is processed rids the syrup of any additional nutrients found in brown rice, and it may be high in arsenic, depending on the arsenic level of the rice used. I recommend avoiding this sweetener.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 1 Tablespoon

CALORIES: 75

CARBOHYDRATES: 18g

DIETARY FIBER: 0g

SUGAR: 22g

YACON SYRUP

Brown rice syrup is a sweetener derived from brown rice that is 100% glucose with no fructose. Though brown rice syrup is promoted as a healthy sweetener alternative, it is actually worse than white sugar in many ways.

PROS

Yacon syrup is very low on the glycemic index and contains half the calories of granulated white sugar. The biggest benefit of Yacon syrup is that it contains high amounts of fructooligosaccharides (FOS). This is a type of prebiotic fiber that can't be absorbed by the body and instead feeds the good bacteria in our guts and can help contribute to gut health.

CONS

May cause digestive upset in sensitive individuals due to the prebiotic fiber, so start off with small amounts to see how it works for you.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT

SERVING SIZE: 1 teaspoon

CALORIES: 13

CARBOHYDRATES: 4g

DIETARY FIBER: 0g

SUGAR: 3g

MAPLE SYRUP

Maple syrup is an unrefined sweetener that is derived from the sap of maple trees.

PROS

Maple syrup is lightly lower than granulated white sugar on the glycemic index. Also, since maple syrup is less refined than white sugar, it maintains trace minerals like zinc and manganese and contains up to 24 different antioxidants

CONS

While maple syrup is lower on the glycemic index than white sugar, it is still high enough to cause blood sugar spikes and should be used sparingly.

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT
SERVING SIZE: 1 Tablespoon
CALORIES: 52
CARBOHYDRATES: 13g
DIETARY FIBER: 0g
SUGAR: 13g

HONEY

Honey is a natural sweetener that was likely around even in the Paleolithic era and has wonderful vitamin and antibacterial properties.

PROS

Honey is an all-natural sweetener with antibiotic properties that can be helpful for healing wounds or getting over colds. Honey can also be useful for seasonal allergies because it can build up your tolerance to the pollen you're allergic to slowly. Finally, honey contains prebiotics that are good for your gut flora, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

CONS

The main con against honey is that like maple syrup or coconut sugar it is still high on the glycemic index and should be used sparingly. Additionally, it is higher in fructose than glucose. While glucose can be simply processed by the body and used for immediate energy, fructose must first be broken down by the liver and then used as glucose, placing additional strain on the body. Overall, honey is a great choice of sweetener to use occasionally!

CALORIE & CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT
SERVING SIZE: 1 Tablespoon
CALORIES: 64
CARBOHYDRATES: 17.3g
DIETARY FIBER: 2g
SUGAR: 17.2g