

ENJOY OCCASIONALLY & IN MODERATION

Honey: Honey, (raw, and in moderation as is sweeter than sugar) is full of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Honey is known to be an ancient cure for a long list of medical conditions and is the darling of ayurvedic practitioners.

Maple Syrup: Produced by “tapping” a maple tree, maple syrup is a good source of antioxidants, manganese and zinc. Make sure you get real maple syrup, as opposed to the fake breakfast syrups made of artificial flavors and high-fructose corn syrup.

Maple Sugar: Generally a “whole”, unprocessed product. However, it is sweeter than cane sugar and should be used in small amounts.

Coconut Sugar: A lower GI sweetener, coconut sugar is produced from the sap of cut flower buds of the coconut palm and has a high amount of vitamins and minerals. However, the high demand for this healthy sweetener in western nations has resulted in adverse environmental effects in production countries such as the Philippines.

Date Sugar: Made from dehydrated ground dates, date sugar is a whole food made from a healthy (and delicious) fruit.

Sucanat: Whole cane sugar made by extracting cane juice and heating it into a syrup which creates small granules when dried. Sucanat retains the cane’s molasses and has a good profile of vitamins and minerals.

Rapadura: An unrefined sugar, rapadura is made by evaporating cane juice where the molasses is not separated from the sugar.

AVOID

Refined and hard on your body, try to avoid these sweeteners as much as you can.

White Sugar: Highly refined; depletes your body of nutrients and minerals. Made from what used to be cane, beets or corn. Cattle bone char is often used in the manufacturing process as a de-colorizing filter(!).

Brown sugar: Save your money, brown sugar is basically white sugar with molasses added in.

Agave: Agave, a plant common in Mexico that also gives us tequila, is a controversial sweetener. Proponents say it raises blood sugar less than other sweeteners due to its low glycemic index - this claim has been disputed by many. Agave as it is sold in the stores is also usually highly processed and does not even remotely resemble what raw agave tastes like.

Stevia: Traditionally, the entire leaf of the stevia plant was used as a sweetener and also as a treatment for various ailments. However, stevia extract - the sweetener as we know it today - is basically made in a lab. Studies have shown that stevia can have adverse health effects and I generally advise my clients to stay clear of it.

Brown Rice Syrup: Made of brown rice cooked with enzymes. Unfortunately the use of this sweetener should be minimized due to potentially high levels of arsenic in rice.

NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Food that is made in a lab is unsafe, not natural and should not end up on your plate. Below are the four most commonly available fake sugars out there that should be avoided at all costs (do not believe the marketing hype!):

Aspartame: Found in NutraSweet and Equal, reported side effects range from headaches to brain tumors, depression and multiple sclerosis.

Sucralose: AKA Splenda reportedly causes gut problems and decreases beneficial bacteria in the intestines. Sucralose has also been reported to affect glycemic and insulin responses. Large quantities of sucralose in mice has shown to cause DNA damage.

Sacharin: More commonly known as Sweet & Low, sacharin causes bladder cancer in rats. The FDA proposed a ban on sacharin which was overturned by congress which allowed it to remain on the market as long as it carried a warning label as a potential carcinogen. This label has now been removed.

High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS): The object of a lot of media attention, controversy and government lobbying, HFCS is widely used in processed foods due to its low cost. HFCS is highly refined and has been proven to cause metabolic syndrome and obesity in rats.