

Just about everyone loves sweets, and it doesn't have to be a problem to enjoy them. By being aware of the quality and quantity of the sweeteners you consume, you can satisfy your "sweet tooth" with **healthier alternatives.**

It is quite easy to replace refined white sugar with healthier sweeteners. However, some natural sweeteners can affect the taste, moisture content and acidity of your recipes. So experiment or consult a natural foods cookbook to determine the best results.

Carrot Bars

Bars:

- 2 eggs
- ¾ cup oil (canola or grape seed)
- 1 cup fructose or ½ cup honey
- 2 small jars organic carrot baby food
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ¼ cup brown rice flour or pastry flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Frosting (if desired):

- ¼ cup margarine
- 3 ounces soy cream cheese
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup powdered sugar

First mix the eggs, oil, vanilla and cinnamon, and then add the flour and baking soda. Add baby food to mixture and fold into batter. Pour into greased and floured 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 350° for 20–30 minutes.

Frosting: Beat all ingredients in mixer until smooth. Let cool before adding a thin layer of frosting.

SWEETENERS EQUIVALENT TO ONE CUP OF SUGAR

Sweetener	Amount to replace one cup sugar	Reduce liquid by
Barley malt	1–1¼ cup	¼ cup
Brown rice syrup	1–1¼ cup	¼ cup
Date sugar	¾ cup	none
Fruit sweeteners	1 cup	¼ cup
Honey	½ cup	¼ cup
Maple syrup	½–¾ cup	¼ cup
Molasses	½ cup	none
Stevia	1 teaspoon	none
Sucanat	1 cup	none
Turbinado	1 cup	none

Pumpkin Pie

Serving Size: 6

- 2 cups canned or cooked pumpkin
- ¾ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 12 ounces firm silken tofu, blended until smooth
- 1 9-inch unbaked pie shell

Preheat oven to 425°. Cream together pumpkin, honey and vanilla. Add the salt, cinnamon, ginger, ground cloves, nutmeg and blended tofu, mixing thoroughly. Pour into pie shell. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Lower the temperature to 350° and bake for an additional 40 minutes.

Provided by your food co-op

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ALL ABOUT

Sweeteners



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Healthier Sweeteners

are found in nature like honey, maple syrup, date sugar and fruit juice, or are made from natural foods like barley malt, rice syrup and sorghum. Natural sweeteners are unrefined or only lightly refined so they retain valuable nutrients.

They are digested more slowly and don't cause the "sugar blues."

Natural sweeteners

Agave nectar is a syrup made by cooking down the juice of agave plants. It is made up of mostly fructose, making it a lower glycemic index sweetener. Suitable for vegans.

Barley malt comes from sprouted grains of barley that are kiln dried and cooked with water. The resulting syrup is a mild sweetener with a rich malt flavor, recommended for baking. Barley malt is the commonly used sweetener in soy products. Barley malt available at other stores may contain corn syrup or refined sugar; read labels carefully.

Brown rice syrup is made from brown rice that has been cultured with enzymes, strained, then cooked down to a thick syrup. This sweetener has a mild flavor. It is very good for baking.

Date sugar is dried, pulverized dates. It is very sweet, and although it does not dissolve well, it is fine for cooking or baking.

Fruit juice sweeteners are most often derived from grapes, followed by apples and pears. The end result of the refining process for fruit juice sweeteners is a product similar to white sugar. Fruit juice sweeteners are used to sweeten beverages or food products.

Fructose is the kind of sugar naturally found in fruits and honey. Most of the fructose available commercially is made from refined corn syrup, so those allergic to corn may have an allergic reaction. The body responds to high-fructose corn syrup like it does to other refined sugars. Excess fructose in the diet has been shown to raise triglyceride levels, increasing the risk of heart disease.

Honey is one of the most popular sweeteners for people who want to avoid using refined sugar. Honey is produced by honeybees that take nectar from flowers and transform it. There are several types of honey, depending on the geographic location and the types of flowers from which the bees extract the honey. Darker honey contains more minerals and has stronger flavor than a lighter honey.

Natural honey is minimally processed to remove chunks of beeswax and make it pourable. Read labels to be sure the honey you are getting is not overheated or finely filtered (can remove bee pollen), and does not contain sugar or corn syrup. Honey may contain botulism spores, and should not be given to children less than one year old to protect against infant botulism.

Honey should be stored at room temperature, as it will crystallize if it gets cool. Place a container of crystallized honey in warm water to soften it. Honey is a very versatile sweetener. It can be used for baking or as a spread.

Maple syrup is a popular natural sweetener made by boiling the sap of sugar maple trees down into a syrup. It has a distinctive flavor, and is great poured on pancakes or French toast. It is also used for baking.

Molasses is a by-product of the manufacture of sugar from sugar cane. There are three kinds. Light molasses is the residue from the first extraction of sugar and is the sweetest. Medium molasses is from the second extraction and is darker and less sweet. Blackstrap molasses is the final residue and is very dark and only slightly sweet with a distinctive flavor. Blackstrap molasses is a very good source of calcium and iron. "Unsulphured molasses" indicates that no sulphur was used in the extraction process.

Sorghum is made from sweet sorghum, a grain related to millet and similar in appearance to corn. The juice from the plant is extracted and boiled down into a syrup. It has a flavor and texture similar to that of molasses.

Stevia is a perennial plant native to Brazil, traditionally used as a sweetener in beverages. It is 30 times sweeter than sugar, so two drops of stevia extract can sweeten one cup. Refined stevia powder is also available for baking or use as a flavor enhancer. Stevia may be used by people with candida or yeast conditions as a sweetener.



Sugar cane juice is a vegan sweetener and is made by mechanically extracting the juice from the whole cane and is available in a dehydrated, crystallized form. Sucanat is simply rapidly dehydrated sugar cane juice. Florida Crystals is clarified (though not highly refined or bleached) and then allowed to crystallize like normal sugar, which makes it good for icings and cakes.

Highly refined sweeteners

The average American consumes 100 pounds of sugar per year. Most of this is in the form of refined sugars that are added to processed foods. Refined sugars such as corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, white sugar and brown sugar have no nutritional value.

Sugar or white sugar is made from sugar cane or sugar beets that have been chemically processed or refined to contain 99.9 percent sucrose. This standard leaves little room for the nutrients and fiber that were part of the natural plant. Twenty percent of the cane sugar sold in the U.S. is refined using cow bone char — so many vegans avoid sugar.

Brown sugar is simply white sugar with a bit of molasses added for color.

Turbinado or raw sugar is made the same way as white sugar except for the last extraction of molasses. The standard for raw sugar is 96 percent sucrose.

Corn syrup is a chemically refined syrup made from corn kernels. Dark corn syrup is artificially colored. High fructose corn syrup is made by an additional refining process that splits the two components of corn syrup. It is now a common ingredient of processed foods and beverages.

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