Good/Better/Best: Switching Up Sweeteners

Wading through the list of sugar substitutes can seem daunting at first. This list will help you begin to make healthier choices and steer away from refined sugars (white sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and evaporated cane juice), or avoid artificial sweeteners (sucralose and aspartame).

**Good**

**XYLITOL**
A low calorie sugar alcohol that is a better choice than sucralose and aspartame, xylitol is a non-fermentable sugar that cannot be converted to acid by oral bacteria (making it more tooth-friendly). If you like chewing gum, look for those sweetened just with xylitol.

**AGAVE NECTAR**
Made from the Mexican plant agave (the same plant used to make tequila), this sweetener is less heavily processed than white sugar and high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). Agave nectar is a low glycemic carbohydrate—meaning it won’t cause a spike and crash in blood sugar—though its low glycemic status is largely due to its mostly fructose composition. Because agave nectar is far sweeter than refined sugar, it can be used in much smaller amounts to achieve the same sweetness.

**MAPLE SYRUP**
A sweet taste loved by North Americans, maple syrup is an excellent source of manganese and a good source of zinc. Its unique flavor tastes great on sprouted buckwheat pancakes—or in your tea.

**Better**

**COCONUT SUGAR**
Made from the nectar of the flower buds of the coconut palm tree, this low glycemic sweetener (GI 35) has a sweet, brown sugar-like taste. Coconut palm nectar is usually sold in dry form as coconut palm sugar (not to be confused with palm sugar, sourced from the sap of a different tree). Full of minerals including magnesium, potassium, iron, and zinc, coconut sugar can be used as a 1:1 substitute for refined sugar in most baking applications.
DATES
Nature’s candy, these glucose-rich dried fruits are a great source of sugar when baking or making energy gels and bars. When soaked in water and then pureed, dates create a barely-processed sweet syrup that can be used to sweeten most things.

Best

STEVIA
30 times sweeter than sugar, this South American leaf contains no carbohydrates or calories, and will not affect blood sugar or insulin levels. As a plant-based sweetener, stevia is most aligned with Thrive Forward because it does not contain empty calories. Be sure to purchase whole leaf stevia (as a powder or tincture) that is not combined with any fillers or artificial sweeteners (such as maltodextrin or sucralose).
For more *Thriving* check out Brendan’s Thrive Trilogy of books.

Thrive Foods, Thrive: The Vegan Nutrition Guide, and Thrive Fitness
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