



**Enjoy the Sweetness of the Season**  
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**November 2021**

Do you love the taste of sugary treats but wish there was a healthier way to enjoy them? This holiday season, there's no reason to ditch the traditions that support and give context to our lives. This often includes baking and sharing desserts. Beyond being enjoyable to the palette, these rituals create family and community connections, they foster the spirit of sharing, and can be a great opportunity to learn more about making ALL of your food more nutrient-dense.

Aspartame (NutraSweet or Equal) is a neurotoxic substance that is responsible for more than 75% of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the FDA. One of its ingredients, phenylalanine, blocks serotonin which is closely linked with food cravings and mood. Sucralose (Splenda) has been linked with chronic immunological or neurological disorders and is toxic to the thyroid gland. And then there's the ubiquitous villain - high fructose corn sugar (HFCS). HFCS has been linked to abnormal increase in body fat (especially in the abdomen), higher triglycerides, contamination with mercury, and is almost guaranteed to be from genetically modified foods like corn which cause inflammation and endocrine disruption.

One sweetener's profile that might surprise you is agave. Agave has been touted in the natural foods industry as the better option, but because it is highly refined, the end product is actually higher in fructose than HFCS! Fructose is more harmful than glucose and has been linked with shorter life spans.

There are some great natural sweeteners that have low or no glycemic index, meaning they have less impact on your blood sugar. Plus, these sweeteners are higher in vitamins and minerals that support your body's metabolism of sugar and overall well-being.



Monk Fruit (or Lo Hahn) and Stevia have a glycemic index of zero, meaning they do not increase blood sugar at all. Monk Fruit is less sweet than stevia and can be used as a 1:1 substitution in baking and cooking. Stevia has a distinct flavor that not everyone enjoys in baking, but is a great way to sweeten beverages – especially in its liquid form.

Raw, unprocessed honey is an excellent option because it has loads of antioxidants, minerals, vitamins and phytonutrients. Raw honey is truly a superfood and can actually be used to treat certain health conditions. Be sure to read the label of any honey you choose because once it's been processed at high heat, you lose the health benefits and nutrients and it is no longer a healthy food.

Made from the sap of coconut palms, coconut palm sugar has the highest nutritional content of any commercially available sweetener. It contains B vitamins, vitamin C and is high in potassium, magnesium and zinc. It has a lovely flavor that can be used as a replacement for white or brown sugar in baking. It has a lower glycemic index (35) which means it won't spike your blood sugar. Substitute your white flour for almond or coconut flour and you can now turn any treat nutrient dense!

For other ideas and inspirations, type your favorite dessert into a search engine but add “paleo” or “raw” or “vegan” and see what comes up! The free magazines at natural foods stores often have new ideas for recipes that can mix things up in the kitchen.

