

# Sweet solutions

Thanks to the newest sugar substitutes, it's becoming easier (and healthier) to bake your cake and eat it too!

There are so many alternative sweeteners available now that they seem to be elbowing sugar right off the supermarket shelf. But what's so wrong with sugar? At just 15 calories per teaspoon, "nothing—in moderation," says Lona Sandon, R.D., an assistant professor of clinical nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. "The naturally occurring sugar in an apple is fine, but if we can reduce some of the *added* sugar in our diet, we can remove some of the empty calories." Less than 25 percent of your daily calories should come from the added sugar in foods like cookies, cereal, and ketchup, she says. To satisfy your sweet tooth—especially if you're counting calories, limiting carbs, or dealing with diabetes—try these options:

## SWEETLEAF AND TRUVIA

**What they are:** These sugar alternatives are the latest made from stevia, an herb found in Central and South America

that is up to 40 times sweeter than sugar but has zero calories and won't cause a jump in your blood sugar. Stevia was slow to catch on because of its bitter, licorice-like aftertaste, but makers of Truvia and SweetLeaf have solved this problem by using the sweetest parts of the plant in their products.

**Where to find them:** In grocery stores and natural-food stores throughout the country and online at [sweetleaf.com](http://sweetleaf.com) and [truvia.com](http://truvia.com).

**How to use them:** Both work well in coffee and tea or sprinkled over fruit, cereal, or yogurt. You can't substitute stevia-based products for sugar in baked goods, though, because these products are sweeter than sugar and don't offer the same color and texture. Makers of SweetLeaf promise to come out with a baking formulation soon.

**Health Rx:** "Truvia's one of the

most promising alternatives out there," says nutritionist Jonny Bowden, Ph.D., author of *The Healthiest Meals on Earth*. "Right now, it looks safe. It tastes just like sugar and has almost no glycemic index, which means it won't spike your blood sugar."

## WHEY LOW

**What it is:** Three naturally occurring sugars—fructose, the sugar in fruit; sucrose, or table sugar; and lactose, the sugar in milk—are blended to create this sweetener. While individually the sugars are fully caloric, when blended in Whey Low they interact in such a way that they aren't completely absorbed into the body. As a result, at four calories per teaspoon, Whey Low has one quarter of the calories and less than one third of the glycemic index of sugar, so you're less likely to crash after consuming it. It's available in varieties similar to granular sugar, brown sugar, maple sugar, and confectioners' sugar.

**Where to find it:** At grocery stores, like Whole Foods Market, online at [wheylow.com](http://wheylow.com), and in some baked goods at bakeries around the country.

**How to use it:** "Whey Low's flavor and texture are very similar to sugar's and it's easy to use," says Yasmine Sandhu, the pastry chef at Rock Creek, a restaurant in Washington, D.C., which uses Whey Low to keep calorie counts down. "I've substituted it into all my recipes as if it were sugar. The only product I've had trouble with is meringue—it browns a little quicker and doesn't set quite as well."

**Health Rx:** "Whey Low's creator argues that the way the sugars interfere with each other means that you get all of the sweet but many fewer calories than sugar," says Thomas Castonguay, Ph.D., a professor of food science at the University of Maryland in College Park. "We're testing that process here in the lab, and the preliminary results look promising." ▶



Sugar alternatives sweeten the (coffee) pot with fewer calories.