

# WHICH ARE THE BEST SUGAR SUBSTITUTES

By Jennifer Knollenberg



There are many options available at the supermarket or online for sugar substitutes. But knowing which ones are the best tasting and most healthy is not obvious.

Here's the scoop on the sweetener industry and it's not so sweet. The sugar industry does not want you to **stop eating sugar**, they lobby Congress and spend large amounts of money to keep sugar in your foods. This is evidenced by the huge amount of products on the market that contain sugar that is hidden in plain sight. Did you know that most crackers and even potato chips often have sugar in them? Not to mention the usual suspects of cookies and other packaged treats.

There are also products on the market that say they are sugar-free but actually contain mostly sugar...Kraft Sugar Free Cool Whip is one example. It says on the label in bold letters that it is sugar free but the second ingredient is corn syrup (sugar!). I am assuming that it is legal to say that corn syrup is not sugar – oh those labeling technicalities!



I have been using and researching sugar replacements for nearly 20 years. Originally, there was aspartame, SweetN'Low® or stevia. Now there are even more sweeteners on the market than ever before and they are becoming more and more available to the average consumer.

Now, you can choose from **sugar-free commercial brands** such as:

Acesulfame Potassium (acesulfame potassium or Ace-K)

Born Sweet Zing™ (Maltodextrin or dextrose and stevia)

Ideal® (xylitol and other ingredient(s) not listed)

Just Like Sugar® (chicory root fiber, calcium, vit C, orange peel extract)

Just Like Sugar® Brown (chicory root fiber, calcium, vit C, orange peel extract and natural molasses type flavor)

Lankanto® Monk Fruit (erythritol and monk fruit extract)

Lankanto® Monk Fruit Golden (erythritol and monk fruit extract)

Nutra Taste Blue® (aspartame/NutraSweet®)

Spenda® (maltodextrin and sucralose)

Splenda® Brown Sugar Blend (sugar, molasses, glycerin, sucralose)

Stevia in the Raw® (dextrose and stevia)

Sukrin® Gold (erythritol, tagatose, glycerol, malt extract, stevia)

SweetN'Low® (saccharine)

Swerve® (erythritol and oligosaccharides)

Truvia® (erythritol and stevia)

Wholesome™ All Natural Zero (erythritol)

Wholesome™ Stevia Spoonable (agave inulin, stevia, silica)

With so many **sweeteners** to choose from things can get complicated quickly. Not only that, but with more sugar-free products coming out every month knowing what you are buying is very important. Did you notice the copyright and trademark symbols on each product? Sweeteners are a big industry and growing bigger every year. Competition is tight with many of the companies and it gets serious when you consider that a lot of the ingredients are considered supplements (not foods). The playing field changes all the time. But the take home message is the same:

***When it comes to choosing a sweetener it is best to choose one or several that are pure and not blends.***



Why?

There are several reasons. First let's look at two sweeteners from the list that I **do not recommend**: Splenda® (in any form) and Stevia in the Raw®.

This is because they contain maltodextrin or dextrose as their main ingredients. These are simply another form of sugar with a **glucose index** that is equal to or close to that of sugar. They are used because both of these products are meant to replace sugar in recipes cup for cup. This takes the thinking out of substituting your ingredients. You simply measure out the same amount as the sugar in your recipe. The amount of calories provided by the maltodextrin or dextrose is about 1/4 less than if you used sugar. But calories aside... of bigger concern is the fact that the maltodextrin and dextrose are still just sugar and will still affect your **blood sugar**. I also am not a huge fan of Splenda® as it is synthetic, it is debatable whether it is healthy, and it leaves a lingering taste for some.

Synthetics are great choices in some cases but when it comes to sweeteners or most anything you might put in or on your body (lotions and creams) please keep it non-synthetic or as natural as possible. It is only in the last hundred years or so that we have been consuming high amounts of flavors, sweeteners, and other products with **synthetic ingredients** – even pharmaceuticals and we are paying a high health price for them all. For this reason I do not recommend any products containing acesulfame potassium, aspartame, sucralose or saccharine.

The sweetener list is beginning to get a little smaller.



The remaining products contain mostly xylitol, chicory root fiber, inulin, oligosaccharide, monk fruit, stevia or erythritol. All of these ingredients are **found in nature** and are produced from natural products – they are not synthetic. Here’s a list of what they are derived from:

**Xylitol** – sugar alcohol extracted from the bark from the Birch tree or corn cobs. It is equally as sweet as sugar but with half the calories and a very small glucose index.

**Chicory Root Fiber** – root from the dandelion family. It is about 1/10th as sweet as sugar and is mostly soluble fiber.

**Inulin** – soluble fiber found in fruits, vegetables and plants such as agave, asparagus, banana, burdock, chicory root, Jerusalem artichoke, jicama, leek, onion and yacon. It is about 1/10th as sweet as sugar.

**Oligosaccharide** – component of fiber from plants. Fructo-oligosaccharide (FOS) is often derived from chicory root. FOS can also be synthesized from sugar by enzymes from *Apergillus niger* fungus. It is about 35% as sweet as sugar.

**Monk Fruit** – extract from a round green melon grown in Asia. It is 200-300 times as sweet as sugar.

**Stevia** – herb from the daisy family native to Paraguay and Brazil. It is 300 times as sweet as sugar.

**Erythritol** – sugar alcohol extracted from starches in fruit and vegetables (usually corn). It is 70% as sweet as sugar.

Anytime you are replacing one ingredient for another there is a trade-off. As noted previously, some of the sweeteners are not as sweet as or are much sweeter than sugar. These sweeteners are considered pure fiber and may cause gastric upset.

So, which products should you choose?

First let's consider the gastric effects. The sweeteners that will cause gastric upset if consumed in high amounts are xylitol, chicory root fiber, inulin, and oligosaccharides. This happens because these sweeteners act as fiber and are not digested. Xylitol is the most like sugar in this group, the others are not as sweet and so much more must be used. Xylitol performs great in baking and dissolves easily in water. Until a tolerance is reached, it cannot be replaced 1:1 for sugar due to gastric upset in higher amounts. Essentially, it acts as a laxative pulling in water from your gut when consumed. 1 tablespoon of xylitol is just under the amount where most people find it has a laxative affect.

The remaining sweeteners are combinations of erythritol and another intense sweetener. For example, *Lankanto*®, *Swerve*® or *Truvia*®. The downside is that these may not be easy to find except online and they do not work in all recipes. They may behave differently than you expect in comparison to sugar as far as how they function in foods. For example, erythritol performs similar to sugar in baking but does not dissolve easily in liquids and can sometimes recrystallize when used in similar amounts that one would use sugar.

Now what? Thanks for sharing Jen, but I have no idea which sweeteners to use now.



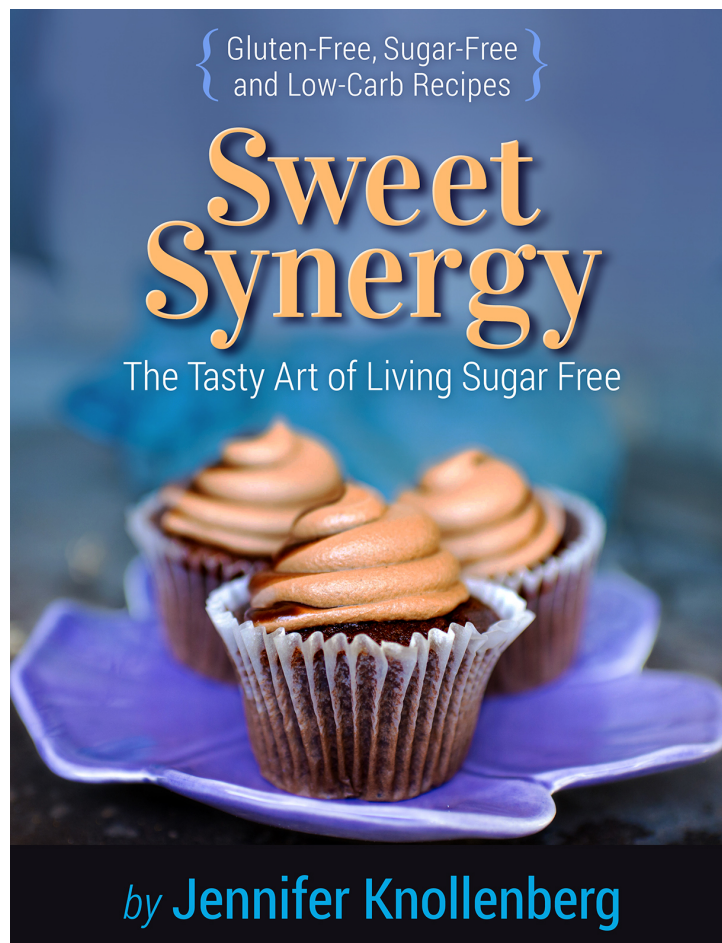
Not to worry. I have been working with all of these sweeteners over the last 5 years. Testing and more testing. ***Ultimately, what I found is that the best combination of sweeteners is a combination of pure erythritol, xylitol and stevia.*** Why is this the best combination? Because they work synergistically together to mimic sugar both in taste and functionality.



The bad news is that there really isn't a specific formula to use for every recipe. It really depends on what you are making. Instead of relying on a mixture ***I blend my own*** and can use varying amounts of each to produce the best tasting recipe.

AND You Can Too! I recommend starting with about half as much sugar as you would normally add to your recipe. So if it calls for a cup - add 1/4 cup xylitol and 1/4 cup erythritol (or 1/2 cup of one or the other) AND a pinch of pure stevia. Most recipes do not need all the sugar listed to function properly so cutting it in half will work. Adding in the stevia helps to add non-caloric sweetening power. This simple combination will work for most recipes but be aware that it is not fail proof. For fail proof recipes I recommend recipes that have been thoroughly tested.

I encourage you to play with these sweeteners if you have the time and money to invest in recipe testing. Sweeteners can be very expensive. Or you could simply start by trying a few recipes on [my website](#) or if you are ready to plunge into it [buy my book!](#)



Here's where you can purchase these sweeteners online and my recommended brands:

[Erythritol](#)

[Stevia](#)

[Xylitol](#)

Xylitol, erythritol and products made with them can also be purchased from [Xylitol USA](#)

I hope you find this information useful!

I LOVE hearing from you. If you have a question or would like to share pictures of one of the *Sweet Synergy* recipes, email me! [Jen@jenniferknollenberg.com](mailto:Jen@jenniferknollenberg.com)

**Have a question or feel like you need a little extra help? Contact me to schedule a free consultation. I'd love to help guide you in your health journey. —*Jen***