

## Guide to Natural Sweeteners

Taken from Nourishing Traditions pg. 536-537 by Sally Fallon

“Natural sweeteners” may be defined as the products of sweet foods which the nutrients have not been removed, or may even be more concentrated due to boiling down and evaporation.

**Raw Honey:** Honey that has not been heated over 117 degrees is loaded with amylases, enzymes that digest carbohydrates, as well as all the nutrients found in plant pollens. This makes it an ideal sweetener for porridge and toast, as the amylases in raw honey helps digest grains. Glucose tolerance tests indicate that, for most people, honey does not upset blood sugar levels as severely as does refined sugar. Buy honey labeled “raw” and use it in desserts that do not require heating. Raw honey should not be given to infants as they lack sufficient stomach acid to deactivate bacteria spores.

**Maple Syrup:** The concentrated sap of the huge deciduous trees, maple syrup is rich in trace minerals, brought up from below ground by the tree’s deep roots. It imparts a wonderful flavor to cream based desserts and may be used in baked goods, such as muffins and pancakes. Unfortunately, formaldehyde is used in the production of most commercial maple syrup.

**Rapadura:** Rapadura is the commercial name for dehydrated cane sugar juice, which the people of India have used for thousands of years. It is rich in minerals, particularly silica. Rapadura has a wonderful flavor and closely mimics sugar in chemical properties. It gives the best results for cookies and cakes but be careful not to overdo – in large amounts Rapadura can upset the body chemistry just as much as sugar.

**Stevia Powder:** A sweet powder made from a South American herb, stevia can be used by those who are sensitive even to natural sweeteners. A little goes a very long way – a pinch of stevia powder will sweeten as effectively as a spoonful of sugar. As it does not add bulk, it is difficult to use successfully in baked goods, but stevia powder is a good sweetener for salad dressings, smoothies, whipped cream and pie crusts.

**Date Sugar:** Made from nutritious dehydrated dates, it does not dissolve easily and is therefore unsuitable for many desserts. Its high tryptophan content makes it a good sweetener for hyperactive children as this amino acid has a calming effect. Date sugar is delicious on breakfast porridge.

**Molasses:** A “waste” product from the production of refined sugar. Molasses has a strong taste and moderate sweetness. If extracted from sugar cane grown in well

fertilized soils, it will contain many minerals, especially iron, calcium, zinc, copper and chromium.

**Malted Grain Syrups:** Made with malted grains, usually barley, these syrups have been used for thousands of years, especially in the Orient. Sprouted grains are kiln-dried and the rootlets removed. The grains are then ground up, dipped briefly in an acid solution and heated with water to form malt syrup. Malt syrup is about 65% maltose, a disaccharide composed of two glucose molecules. (Sucrose is a disaccharide, composed of glucose and fructose.) Malted syrups contain small amounts of nutrients, but their real value is in the fact that they contain little fructose, which in large amounts is far more harmful than glucose.

**Sorghum Syrup:** A sweetener once popular in the Southern United States, sorghum syrup is made from sweet sorghum, a grain related to millet that grows on woody stalks to a height of 15 feet. The syrup is made by boiling the sorghum sap. It takes 8 to 12 gallons of sap to make one gallon of the syrup. Sorghum syrup contains B vitamins and minerals like iron, calcium and phosphorus. It can be used in place of maple syrup.

**Naturally Sweetened Jams:** Look for jams sweetened with dehydrated sugar cane juice rather than fructose or high fructose corn syrup.

**The following sweeteners are used in many so-called health food products, but should be avoided.**

**Fructose and High Fructose Corn Syrup:** These are highly refined products composed mostly of fructose. It is the fructose, not the glucose, part of sucrose that causes deleterious effects, especially in growing children.

**Concentrated Fruit Juice:** Fruit juices that have been boiled down are composed largely of fructose.

**“Raw,” “Natural,” Turbinado and Sucanat Sugars and Florida Crystals:** These are all refined sugars from which the nutrients have been removed. Small amounts of molasses may be added back to give a light brown color.