

WOMEN'S
RunningSleek Legs,
Great Butt!
20 Minutes to an Amazing Lower Body

Slim-Down

Brown Rice Syrup

What? The honey-like consistency and caramel flavor of this syrup is created when brown rice starch is exposed to enzymes.

Why? Your body breaks down brown rice syrup slowly, resulting in a minimal blood sugar spike, and it's free of fructose, which can promote weight gain and diabetes.

Where? Lundberg Farms Organic Sweet Dreams Brown Rice Syrup (\$6 for 21 oz., lundberg.com)

Peppermint, gingerbread, eggnog and pie! The holiday season is full of sweet treats steeped in tradition—and saturated with sugar. While enjoying a bowl (or two) of bread pudding is sometimes a necessary indulgence, the refined sweeteners used to make it are big on calories and low on anything healthful.

Instead of filling your measuring cup with the white granulated stuff, take a cue from Mother Earth. Natural ingredients nourish your body while satisfying your most decadent cravings. Our guide to everything naturally, joyously sweet.

Blackstrap Molasses

What? The viscous, bittersweet liquid is left over after sugar crystals have been removed from the cane.

Why? Blackstrap molasses contains disease-fighting antioxidants nearly any other sweetener. It boasts a rich range of minerals, including calcium, potassium, iron and zinc.

Where? Tree of Life Blackstrap Molasses (\$17 for 32 oz., nutricity.com)

Buckwheat Honey

What? Industrious worker bees turn buckwheat nectar into this tea-time treat.

Why? Dark varieties, such as buckwheat, contain health-boosting antioxidants. Honey also helps soothe sore throats and coughs.

Where? Local Harvest Buckwheat Honey (\$9 for 24 oz., localharvest.com)

Agave Syrup

What? Syrup extracted from spiky, desert-dwelling agave, the same plant used to make tequila.

Why? Boasting an extremely low glycemic index, agave is roughly 40 percent sweeter than sugar, so you can use less with the same effect.

Where? Wholesome Sweeteners Organic Blue Agave (\$10 for 24 oz., wholesomesweeteners.com)

Date Sugar

What? This granulated, sugar-like substance is made from ground, dehydrated dates.

Why? Date sugar is perfect for baking, and it contains all the fiber, vitamins and minerals, including energy-boosting iron, found in the dried fruit.

Where? Bob's Red Mill Date Sugar (\$13 for 24 oz., bobsredmill.com)

Stevia

What? Derived from an herb native to Paraguay, this naturally calorie-free sweetener is available in granulated or liquid form.

Why? The lack of calories will keep your blood sugar stable without the chemical taste (and potential health risks) of aspartame.

Where? Truvia Spoonable (\$7 for 9 oz., truvia.com)

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(Sweet Swap Secrets)

- For every cup of liquid sweetener used as a replacement for granulated sugar in a recipe, reduce the amount of liquid you use (i.e., milk or oil) by 25 percent.
- Add a pinch of baking soda to balance acidity.
- Lower oven temperature by 25° to avoid over-browning and bake for a little longer.

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Apple Raspberry
Crisp

(shown on opposite page)

Serves 8

- 1 1/2 cups rolled oats
- 1/2 cup walnuts, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup date sugar
- 1/2 cup plus 2 Tbsp. whole-wheat flour
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. cardamom
- 5 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 medium-sized apples, cored and sliced thinly
- 2 cups fresh or frozen raspberries
- 1/2 cup brown rice syrup
- 1/2 cup raisins
- Juice from 1/2 lemon
- 1 Tbsp. fresh ginger, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 350°. Combine oats, walnuts, sugar, 1/2 cup flour, cinnamon and cardamom in a medium bowl. Drizzle with oil and mix until evenly moist. Add more oil if the mixture appears dry.

In a separate bowl, combine apples, raspberries, brown rice syrup, raisins, remaining flour, lemon juice and ginger. Mix well. Transfer the fruit mixture to a lightly-greased cake pan and spread out evenly. Sprinkle the oat topping over the fruit mixture.

Bake until the topping is golden, about 50 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes before serving.

NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING:
345 calories, 5g protein, 15g fat (1g saturated), 52g carbohydrates, 6g fiber, 7mg sodium

SWEET
Dreams

Hey there, sugar! Have your cake and eat it too with nutritious natural sweeteners.

Matthew Kury, MS, RD

Recipe photography by Unorthodox | Jennifer Scott & Salvatore Brancato

Chocolate Pistachio
Fruit Bark

Serves 12

- 12 ounces unsweetened baking chocolate, chopped
- 1/2 cup agave or brown rice syrup
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 1/2 cup dried tart cherries
- 1/2 cup pistachios, chopped
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne or chili powder (optional)
- 1/4 tsp. ginger powder (optional)
- 1/2 tsp. fleur de sel (or kosher salt)

Line a rimmed baking sheet with wax paper. Melt chocolate and liquid sweetener in a double boiler until very smooth. Stir in half the dried fruit, half the pistachios and both of the spices.

Spread chocolate mixture onto the baking sheet. Sprinkle with remaining dried fruit and fleur de sel. Chill in the refrigerator until firm, about 30 minutes. Break into pieces for serving.

NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING:
231 calories, 5g protein, 17g fat (9g saturated), 25g carbohydrates, 6g fiber, 106mg sodium