



Ricki Heller

A healthy lifestyle *can* be sweet!

Healthy Natural Alternatives to Sugar & Gluten

Are you looking to replace the refined sugar and gluten in your foods? Here are some of the best alternatives out there so that you can start cooking and eating better.

In most cases, you can simply replace your regular sweeteners with these. Flours require a mix of 3-4 different gluten-free flours to achieve the same texture and effects as wheat flour.

For a complete guide to substituting for sugar, gluten, eggs and dairy, see the [Food Freedom course](#).

DRY SWEETENERS:

- **Sucanat (SUGar CAne NATural)**—evaporated cane juice. Same GI (glycemic index) as regular sugar, but slightly better nutritionally.
- **Coconut Sugar**—from the coconut palm tree, granular light brown. Lower GI (around 35).
- **Maple Sugar**—dehydrated maple syrup, granular light brown. High GI (around 98).
- **Date sugar**—dried and ground dates. High GI.
- **Sugar alcohols** (including Lakanto)—includes erythritol, xylitol (despite the chemical-sounding name, these are made from plant sources and don't actually include any sugar OR any alcohol!). Low GI (from 0 to 25).
- **Monk Fruit** (dried fruit powder)—Lakanto sweetener (along with erythritol). Zero GI.
- **Pure stevia powder**—this natural herb is up to 100x sweeter than sugar (Zero GI, zero calories). Always look for pure stevia that hasn't been mixed with fillers.



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WET SWEETENERS:

- **Maple syrup**—sap of maple trees (darker is more nutritious). High GI.
- **Blackstrap molasses**—final produce of sugar refinement; the blackstrap molasses has the heartiest flavor and the most minerals and nutrients. Moderate GI (around 55).
- **Brown rice syrup**—syrup from brown rice processing. Very thick, light caramel-colored syrup. Lower GI (around 35)
- **Coconut nectar**—from the sap of the coconut palm. Thick caramel-colored syrup. Lower GI (around 35)
- **Yacon syrup**—derived from the yacon root. Looks and tastes sort of like molasses. Low GI (0-25).
- **Vegetable glycerin** (food grade)—clear syrup-like vegetable product derived from coconut (usually). Low GI.
- **Stevia**—herb that is dried and powdered, then extracted and mixed with filtered water, glycerin or alcohol for the liquid varieties. Zero GI.



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Most Commonly Used Gluten-Free Grains & Flours:

COMMON GLUTEN-FREE GRAINS:

- **Rice**—all forms of rice are gluten-free (even the Chinese variety that is called “glutinous rice,” an unfortunate and misleading name!). If brown rice is new to you, brown Basmati is best, as it cooks in just 20 minutes and has a fairly light flavor.
- **Quinoa** (pronounced “keen-wa”)—beige, red or black grains (each tastes more nutty/earthy than the previous one), the gluten-free grain with the highest protein content. Regular beige quinoa cooks in 15-20 minutes; the darker varieties are nuttier in flavor and take longer.
- **Buckwheat**—another misnomer, buckwheat contains neither wheat nor gluten. This light brown, slightly square grain has a very earthy, nutty flavor and is often called kasha when toasted. Cooks in about 15 minutes.
- **Millet**—round, light yellow grain with a very mild flavor. Great for porridge. Cooks in about 25 minutes.
- **Oats**—regular oats may be cross-contaminated with gluten, but certified gluten-free oats are fine. Depending on the type of oat, cooks anywhere from 15-40 minutes.
- **Corn**—yes, corn is actually a grain! And, it’s gluten-free, whether on the cob, dried, in flour or in popcorn (as long as it’s certified gluten-free).
- **Amaranth**—a small, yellow round grain with a very earthy flavor. It has a high protein content and cooks in about 25 minutes.
- **Teff**—the smallest grain on earth, this tiny round, brown grain has a nutty flavor and works well with chocolate or carob.
- **Sorghum**—this pale, round grain has a mild flavor and works well as a flour for baking.



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COMMON GLUTEN-FREE FLOURS:

Use this handy chart to help you decide which of the many gluten-free flours would work best in your recipes.

FLOUR	TASTE	TEXTURE	COLOR
GRAIN-BASED			
Brown rice	Neutral	Gritty	Light (beige)
Quinoa	Nutty/robust/smoky	Smooth	Light (beige)
Amaranth	Nutty/robust	Smooth	Light (yellow)
Millet	Neutral	Smooth	Light (yellow)
Buckwheat	Smoky/nutty	Smooth	Light (brown)
Teff	Caramel or chocolate	Gritty	Medium (brown)
Sorghum	Neutral	Smooth	Light (beige)
BEAN-BASED			
Chickpea	Beany	Smooth	Light (yellow)
Garfava	Beany	Smooth	Light (yellow)
Lentil	Subtle beany	Smooth	Light (green)
NUT/SEED BASED			
Almond	Neutral	Gritty	Light (yellow)
Cashew	Neutral	Smooth, fine	Light (beige)
Sunflower seed	Sunflower taste	Smooth	Light (greeny-beige)*
Pumpkin seed	Neutral	Gritty	Light (green)
OTHER			
Coconut	Neutral	Grainy → smooth	Light (white)
Cassava	Neutral	Smooth	Light (beige)
STARCHES			
Arrowroot	Neutral	Smooth	Light (white)
Tapioca starch	Neutral	Smooth	Light (white)
Potato starch	Neutral	Smooth	Light (white)
Sweet rice flour	Neutral	Smooth	Light (white)