

Part 4, Chapter 44: Stevia, an Actually Healthy Sweetener, Sort Of

For the record, in no way am I commenting on companies that process pure stevia into a viable herbal sweetening product. In fact, in its unadulterated form, it's an excellent sweetener with nutritional benefits. For those companies that refuse to compromise this amazing sweetener, I commend you. Unfortunately, some companies are not this noble.

Given that processed sugar is such a substance to be avoided, and that artificial sweeteners are even worse, what's left? There's honey, molasses, date and coconut sugar ... not much actually. Then there is stevia, which is a tropical herb and actually a very safe sweetener in its whole form.

Given the fact that more and more people are becoming aware of the extreme dangers of aspartame, the food industry is now marketing a product called "Splenda" as a 'healthy' sweetener because it contains stevia. Dr. Mercola has an excellent article about "Splenda", sucralose at <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2000/12/03/sucralose-dangers.aspx>. It's criminal the way this company is trying to deceive people into thinking that Splenda is safe because it contains stevia, which is in fact a very healthy sweetener. You can read Dr. Mercola's article on your own but, suffice it to say that Splenda is not your friend.

Stevia is an herb (grown in tropical regions) that is inherently sweet. In its ideal state the leaves are essentially dried and ground into a powder. Admittedly, while it is a safe sweetener, **having** to sweeten your foods is something of an illusion. Fruits and vegetables contain natural sugars and do not require sweetening. The real issue is that most people are so addicted to refined sugar that foods do not taste 'normal' unless heavily sweetened.

I'm reminded, for example, that my mother used to heap on tablespoons of refined sugar on top of sliced strawberries because she didn't think they were sweet enough. To my way of thinking, that's absurd.

Raw stevia adds sweetness to foods. Still, be very aware that sweetening your food is a habit and not a necessity. Tart, for example lemon juice, in distilled water, is an excellent cleansing drink that does not require sweetening. Nevertheless, if you're using stevia, make sure it's a pure natural form.

Products such as Truvia contain 1% stevia and a bunch of crap. Splenda also has stevia, but it is also extremely toxic. As Dr. Mercola points out, the side effects include "gastro-intestinal problems, seizures, dizziness and migraines, blurred vision, allergic reactions [and] blood sugar increases and weight gain".^{1}

My best advise on stevia is that it's okay, if you really want it. The fact is, you'll be much better off learning to live with the natural taste of healthy foods. The reason that sweetening food is even considered necessary is because we are so used to the stimulating state of processed and fast foods that real food's natural taste becomes hard to experience. A life style of fasting once a week, plus eliminating toxic foods from your diet will go a long way toward restoring your body's ability to actually taste real food again. Emmale's and my

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experience has been that the more you get away from fake food and return to real food, the less you'll feel the 'need' to sweeten what you eat. Stevia, in the final analysis, becomes a luxury and, in fact, it's a substance, even if herb based, that you really don't need.