



# Ingredient Hot List

## SWEETENERS

As rising prices continue and the search for natural and better-for-you additions reign on, consumers are searching for value in their sweetener of choice. As these alternatives are often met with consumer uncertainty and conflicting information, today's shoppers are searching for guidance and knowledge on their sugar intake through products they're consuming. From more widely used options like honey and stevia to up and coming sweet additions like date syrup and demerara sugar, let's see what's sweet in this space as we check out what's new, what's hot, and how consumers feel about the sweet world of sugar substitutes.

# LET'S KEEP IT SHORT AND SWEET –

*Consumers want added sweetness without all the added sugars. On top of that, they're also looking for an affordable price and simple ingredients.*



Today's consumers are adjusting to rising prices for just about everything, and with that, they're looking for value in their food and beverage choices. And when it comes to sweeteners, they're looking for versatile alternatives that can sweeten a variety of dishes.

With their health also in mind, they're also interested in learning about the sweeteners they're consuming and many are searching for alternatives with a healthy halo – from natural and simple ingredients to clean label on pack and more.

*Many of these sweeteners of interest fall in the trend of natural or clean label products – let's take a look.*

***“As consumers continue to navigate messaging surrounding sugar consumption, brands face the challenge of proving the positives, however, there is opportunity to help consumers feel informed and in control when making their sugar and sweeteners choices.”***

– MINTEL



*How Sweet it is!  
...or How Sweet is it?*

## 62% OF CONSUMERS

*would like to know more about the differences between sugar/ sweeteners*

## 58% OF CONSUMERS

*say sweeteners that have an aftertaste are unappealing*

## 56% OF CONSUMERS

*say sweeteners that provide other nutritional benefits appeal to me*

## 70% OF U.S. SHOPPERS

*chose to limit sugar consumption when buying groceries according to a recent survey*

## 63% OF CONSUMERS

*believe artificial sweeteners are bad for your health*

# HONEY

Perceived as both healthful and indulgent, honey is a natural sweetener found in products cross-category and contains amino acids, vitamins, minerals, iron, zinc and antioxidants. Aside from its use as a sweetener, honey is commonly used to treat coughs, sore throats, wounds and more.

*Honey is 25% sweeter than table sugar, meaning you can use less in recipes. - CNBC*

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**TRADER JOE'S ORGANIC SPICY HOT HONEY** contains 70 calories and 16 grams total sugars per 1 tablespoon serving. The Spicy Honey Sauce features a natural chili pepper flavor.



**BOB'S RED MILL BOB'S BAR PEANUT BUTTER BANANA & OATS BARS** are made from simple ingredients, including whole grain oats for easy nourishment. The bar features simple ingredients and is sweetened with organic honey.

*46% of consumers note using honey as a sweetener in the past month*

- MINTEL



# STEVIA

Derived from a South American plant, Stevia rebaudiana, Stevia is a non-nutritive sweetener that is 200-450 times sweeter than sugar. Stevia has inherent taste and formulation challenges, with a slow onset sweetness and a bitter, lingering aftertaste. Taste improvement is the focus of current research and patents, many of which blend stevia with other sweeteners and bulking ingredients.

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**LILLY'S MILK CHOCOLATE STYLE PEANUT BUTTER CUPS** feature a peanut butter filling with 40% cocoa with 2 sweet creamy bites per cup. The product contains less than 1g of sugar and is sweetened with stevia.

43% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product



**ZEVIA CREAMY ROOT BEER** is said to be made with simple, plant-based ingredients and is naturally flavored. The product is free from calories, sugar, caffeine and gluten and is sweetened using stevia leaf extract.

32% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

*20% of consumers note using stevia as a sweetener in the past month*

- MINTEL





# DEMERARA SUGAR

Demerara Sugar is raw, light brown, large-grain and made with sugar cane. The sugar is minimally refined and has a natural toffee-like flavor. Though there is debate on how nutritionally rich this sugar is, it comes with a unique flavor and texture.

*Demerara sugar has grown triple-digits over the past four years on restaurant menus – DATASSENTIAL*

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**VEGAN ROB'S SWEET AND SALTY POPCORN** is a kettle popped popcorn featuring demerara sugar. The product is air popped with zero trans fat and features 2g protein and 2g fiber per serving.



**PRIVATE SELECTION MICHIGAN CHERRY & ALMOND Scone Mix** is a naturally flavored mix described as that are crunchy on the outside and soft and moist on the inside. The product features demerara sugar that is used for a sugar topping.

34% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

**28% of consumers are interested in Demerara**

– DATASSENTIAL



# MONK FRUIT

Monk fruit sweetener is extracted from monk fruit, a small round fruit grown in Southeast Asia. It contains zero calories and is up to 300 times sweeter than sugar. Monk fruit contains natural sugars like fructose and glucose, but gets its intense sweetness from antioxidants called mogrosides.

*44% know it; 16% have tried it; 11% love it or like it – DATASSENTIAL*

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**CAPRI SUN ORIGINAL JUICE DRINK POUCHES** will now feature monk fruit concentrate to have an average of 40% less sugar in the beverage. Despite the reformulation, the drink pouches will have no change in taste.



**YUMI STRAWBERRY AND RHUBARB BARS** are made with nine superfood veggies and contain 0g added sugar. The product features date paste in its crust and organic monk fruit concentrate in the bar's filling.

48% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

**Monk Fruit is typically 200-300x sweeter than sugar**

– MINTEL



# DATE SYRUP

High in magnesium, zinc, potassium, calcium, and iron content dates are a great sweetener application for food, beverage better-for-you options. Though its often high cost may be a negative factor for consumers, its simple ingredients offer a better-for-you intrigue for consumers. When used as a sweetener, dates are often used as a syrup that is thicker than maple syrup and similar consistency to honey.

*The Date syrup market is projected to surpass US \$630M by the end of 2031.*

- FORTUNE BUSINESS INSIGHTS

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**PRIMAL KITCHEN NO SOY ISLAND TERIYAKI SAUCE AND MARINADE** features a kick of tropical flavors like pineapple and coconut and is said to sizzle in a stir fry, marinate meats to perfection and add sauce to sautéed veggies. The product features organic date paste and 3g total sugars.

24% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would try this product



**TRADER JOE'S DATE SYRUP** features 100 calories per 2 tablespoon serving and 26 grams of sugar. The product is made from 100% Deglet Noor Dates with nothing added and can be used as a topping or in place of any other syrup.

## SPEAKING OF SYRUP - WHAT ABOUT AGAVE?

*Similar to date syrup and date sweeteners, Agave nectar or agave syrup is making its mark in the industry. Projected to grow in the forthcoming years, agave is commonly used in beverages due to its ability to easily melt and blend in bases. The syrup has a low glycemic index due to its high percentage of fructose but its health claims are often debated.*



*45% of Consumers*  
*in a recent survey rated eating less*  
*sugar as their top goal in 2022,*  
*topping weight loss and improved*  
*diet healthfulness.*

- IFIC'S ANNUAL FOOD AND HEALTH SURVEY

# THE TAKEAWAYS

With a growing number of sweetener and sugar alternative options in the food and beverage space, consumers can be left to weed out uncertainty and conflicting information in media, in the grocery aisle and on pack. Providing increased information related to sweetener details and claims on pack may offer consumers an increased comfortability in their food and beverage purchases. And as costs stay consistently high, versatility and value will be important to consumers looking to sweeten up their diets. For developers, flavor can be used as a tool to overcome taste challenges such as bitterness and off-notes that may come with these sweetener additions. We have the flavor capabilities and technology to help you succeed. If you're looking to get into this space, make it sweet, both in taste and benefit for consumer. Not sure to start? Reach out below for more information.



## SOURCES

- Mintel
- Mintel GNPD
- New Food Magazine
- Datassential
- CNBC
- Fortune Business Insights
- IFIC
- Amazon
- Trader Joe's

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