

The Many Names of Sugar

Brown sugar consists of sugar crystals contained in molasses syrup with natural flavor and color. Some refiners make brown sugar by adding syrup to refined white sugar. It is 91% to 96% sucrose.

Confectioner's sugar, or powdered sugar, consists of finely ground sucrose crystals and mixed with a small amount of cornstarch.

Corn syrups, produced by the action of enzymes and/or acids on cornstarch, are the result of splitting starch. Three major producers' contain 42%, 55% and 90% fructose. Dextrose comprises most of the remainder.

Dextrose, or glucose, is also known as corn sugar. It's commercially made from starch by the action of heat and acids, or enzymes. It is sold blended with regular sugar.

High-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is a sweetener made from cornstarch. The amounts of fructose vary with the manufacturer. An enzyme-linked process increases the fructose content, thus making HFCS sweeter than regular corn syrup.

Honey is an invert sugar formed by an enzyme from nectar gathered by bees. Honey contains fructose, glucose, maltose and sucrose.

Invert sugar is a mixture of glucose and fructose. Invert sugar is formed by splitting sucrose in a process called inversion. This sugar prevents crystallization of cane sugar in candy making.

Lactose, or milk sugar, is made from whey and skim milk for commercial purposes. It occurs in the milk of mammals. The pharmaceutical industry is a primary user of prepared lactose.

Levulose, or fructose, is a commercial sugar much sweeter than sucrose. Its sweetness actually depends on its physical form and how it's used in cooking. Fructose, known as a fruit sugar, occurs naturally in many fruits.

Raw sugar consists of coarse, granulated crystals formed from the evaporation of sugar cane juice. Raw sugar contains impurities and cannot be sold in grocery stores due to FDA regulations.

Sorbitol, mannitol, malitol and xylitol are sugar alcohols or polyols. They occur naturally in fruits and are produced commercially from such sources as dextrose. Xylitol is a sugar alcohol made from a part of birch trees. Sorbitol, mannitol and malitol are about half as sweet as sucrose. Xylitol has a sweetness equal to sucrose.

Sucrose, or table sugar, from sugar cane or sugar beets consists of two simple sugars, glucose and fructose. It is about 99.9% pure and sold in either granulated or powdered form.

Turbinado sugar is raw sugar that goes through a refining process to remove impurities and most of the molasses. It is edible if processed under proper conditions; however, some samples in the past contained trace contaminants.

Adapted from *Dietary Sugar and Alternative Sweeteners* by Janice R. Herman, PhD, RD/LD, Nutrition Education Specialist www.karlloren.com/diet/p36.htm.