

Baking With Sweeteners Is Tricky

Tallahassee Democrat

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What is the difference between the artificial sweeteners? Can I use them just like sugar in my recipes?

There are two types of sweeteners: sugar alcohols and no-calorie sweeteners. Sorbitol and mannitol are sugar alcohols which are used in chewing gum and hard candies. They provide about the same number of calories as table sugar, or sucrose, however they are absorbed more slowly by the body. These sugar alcohols can cause gastrointestinal upset so read labels carefully.

No-calorie sweeteners include saccharin, aspartame, and acesulfame-K and sucralose. Much controversy surrounds artificial sweeteners. Are they safe? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) evaluates artificial sweeteners on composition and properties, how much would be consumed, and the safety of the ingredient. The typical amount consumed is well within the “acceptable daily intake levels” that a person would safely eat each day over a lifetime.

Saccharin, (sold as Sweet n’ Low TM and Sweet Twin TM and as a brown sugar substitute) is very stable for baking but has a noticeable aftertaste when used in large quantities.

Aspartame, (sold as NutraSweet TM and Equal TM) has very little aftertaste, but it loses its sweet taste when heated. Therefore, it is difficult to use for baked or cooked products.

Acesulfame-K (sold as Sweet One TM or Swiss Sweet TM) has less aftertaste than saccharin and is more heat stable than aspartame.

Sucralose (sold as Splenda TM) has the same volume and sweetness of sugar and is heat stable for baking and cooking.

Sugar plays a key role in the texture, flavor, tenderness, and color of baked products. It also adds volume and acts as a preservative. An artificial sweetener will add sweetness but not act like sugar in baked product recipes.

It will take some practice to cook and bake successfully with artificial sweeteners. For best results, start with recipes developed by the artificial sweetener manufacturer. When altering other recipes, start by replacing only half the sugar with a substitute.

The following equivalents are a guide to use in substituting artificial sweetener for sugar:

1/4 cup sugar	6 packets Equal	1/4 cup Equal Spoonful
1/3 cup sugar	8 packets Equal	1/3 cup Equal Spoonful
1 cup sugar	24 packets Equal	1 cup Equal Spoonful
1/4 cup sugar	6 packets Sweet One	
1/3 cup sugar	8 packets Sweet One	
1 cup sugar	24 packets Sweet One	
1 cup sugar	1/2 cup Splenda-Sugar Blend for Baking	

Check the sweetener's package or website for additional information on cooking with the product to yield quality results.

If you are beating ingredients together (such as butter, sugar and eggs), beat them a little longer to add more air to the batter for volume. Since artificially sweetened products bake more quickly, check for doneness in cookies, brownies, and quick breads three to five minutes earlier and in cakes seven to ten minutes earlier than the original recipe's expected bake time. Store baked products in the refrigerator or freezer so they will stay fresh longer.

Sources: North Dakota State University Cooperative Extension Service, <http://www.ext.nodak.edu/extnews/askext/foodss/423.htm>

Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Service, www.russell.ksu.edu

<http://www.equal.com>

<http://www.sweetone.com>

<http://www.splenda.com>