



Planned harvest: Cucumbers, Anaheim Chiles, Eggplants, Basil, Sweet Potatoes, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Onions and Trucker's Delight Sweet Corn.

Agave syrup is local, but is it safe?

There has been some discussion lately regarding the use of agave syrup or nectar and how it raises triglyceride levels. The web is crawling with all sorts of information, misinformation and disinformation about the issue, so it can be difficult to find a clear voice just telling it like it is. The following is about as concise an explanation of the issue as I have found in easy to understand language:

It is true that chemicals are utilized to make some adulterated syrups produced under dubious conditions. However, high quality agave syrup (especially when it is also organic) is extracted according to entirely natural procedures, without any use of chemicals, from the same plant that is used to make tequila.

It's also true that agave syrup is roughly 90% fructose, and in fact this is the main reason why it doesn't increase the blood glucose level in the way refined (white) flours and other sugars do. And fructose does indeed encourage weight gain, but no more so than ordinary sugar does ("sucrose" which is a mixture of glucose and fructose).

Regarding triglycerides: all sugars are metabolized by the liver into triglycerides when the nutritional intake of sugar exceeds expenditure of energy, and this is true of fructose as it is of glucose. To my knowledge, no studies currently suggest that fructose contributes more than white sugar does to insulin resistance (If any such studies do exist I would be grateful if someone could point me to them).

A small proportion of the fructose in agave syrup takes on a particularly interesting form: inulin. It consists of several molecules of fructose linked together. Inulin acts like a fiber rather than a sugar: as a prebiotic it contributes to building up beneficial intestinal flora and helps with the absorption of magnesium and calcium.

Finally, agave syrup is sweeter than sugar. Two-thirds of a teaspoon of agave syrup is usually enough to replace one teaspoon of white sugar. This allows us to consume less of it.

Read the whole article at <http://www.anticancerways.com/post/Agave-syrup-is-still-sugar>

Try to find as high-quality products as you can (buy organic, read the label), and of course use it in moderation. I for one (and yes, I am a diabetic) will continue to use agave nectar.

– *Chris Dimitrakopoulos*

RECIPES ETC.

Nina's Sweet Potato and Mesquite Soft Snaps

2 cups whole-wheat flour (preferably freshly ground; or substitute ½ to 1 cup with white flour for a lighter texture)

½ cup mesquite flour

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp ground nutmeg (or pumpkin spice)

½ tsp salt

1 ½ cup brown sugar

½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened to room temperature

1 cup sweet potato puree

1 Ajo egg

1 tsp vanilla extract

For the sweet potato puree, peel 2 sweet potatoes, cube and steam for 20 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, and mash with a potato masher.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Combine flours, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt in a medium bowl. Beat sugar and butter in large mixer bowl until well blended. Beat in sweet potatoes, egg and vanilla extract until smooth. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Drop by rounded tablespoons onto baking sheets, and bake for 15-18 minutes or until edges are firm. Cool for a minute or two on the baking sheet, and remove to cool completely.

Nina's Sweet Potato and Mesquite Bread

(inspired by *From Asparagus to Zucchini*)

1 ½ cup whole wheat flour (preferably freshly ground; or substitute ½ cup with white flour for a lighter texture)

½ cup mesquite flour

2 cups brown sugar

2 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp baking soda

¼ tsp baking powder

¼ tsp sea salt

¼ cups sunflower or canola oil

4 Ajo eggs

2 tsp pure vanilla extract

3 cups grated sweet potato

1 cup Arizona pecans, chopped

(Note: this recipe makes a thick bread in one 9x9 inch pan; if you prefer thinner bread, e.g. if baking in a solar oven, then either divide the amounts by 2 or use two pans.)

Heat oven to 350°F degrees. Grease a 9x9 inch pan (see note above). Sift the flour, sugar, cinnamon, baking

soda, baking powder, and salt into a bowl. Combine oil, eggs, and vanilla in another bowl and mix well. Stir in grated sweet potatoes. Stir wet ingredients into flour mixture. Stir in pecans until barely combined. Spread in the pan. Bake until toothpick inserted near center comes out dry, about 1 hour and 20 minutes (if you are baking only with a half of an amount, count on baking for about 45 minutes). Let cool at least slightly before slicing. This bread tastes even better the next day!

Nina's Cucumber-Ade

2 cucumbers, peeled, deseeded, and chopped

1 Tbsp agave syrup, or more to taste

1 Tbsp fresh fruit juice (lemon, lime watermelon...) (optional)

Blend the cucumber in a blender with 3-4 cups of water. Strain through a fine mesh to obtain clear liquid, add the agave syrup and fruit juice, stir and serve over ice.

Nina's Creamy Pear Soup

(inspired by *Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant*)

1 medium onion, chopped

1 Tbsp butter (or use oil for vegan version)

5 small turnips, cleaned and chopped (about 1 ½ cup)

2 medium Red LaSoda potatoes, chopped (about 1 ½ cup)

6-8 Asian pears, peeled, cored, and chopped (about 3 cups)

2 tsp dried thyme

1 tsp salt (or more to taste)

1 ½ cups water

½ tsp ground nutmeg

1 cup apple cider

freshly ground pepper to taste

finely sliced red radish for garnish

In a large saucepan, sauté the onion in butter for about 3 minutes, until translucent. Add the turnips, potatoes and pears, thyme and salt and sauté for another 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the water and cook, half covered, at a gentle boil for about 20-25 minutes or until the vegetables and pears are soft. Turn the heat off, add the nutmeg and pepper, and puree the soup in a blender with the apple cider (you might want to choose to do it in two batches). Taste and adjust the seasonings, then serve plain or sprinkled with sliced radish. Note: if you don't have turnips handy, use any other root vegetable such as celeriac or parsnips, but substituting turnips with Red LaSodas will work just fine, too!