



These Are The Best Keto-Approved Sweeteners

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The term "keto dessert" can be confusing—doesn't keto mean cutting most carbs from your diet? Aren't most desserts sugar—and thus—carbohydrate bombs?

First of all, a keto diet is "very high in fat, moderate in protein, and very low in carbohydrates. The idea behind keto is to keep your fat-accumulating hormone, insulin, low by keeping your blood sugar low. In doing so, you turn on fat-burning genes while suppressing the abdominal-fat-amassing machinery," [explains Vincent Pedre, M.D.](#) and mbg Collective member. "While actual percentages vary a little, traditionally, ketogenic diets reduce carbohydrates to less than 50 grams a day."

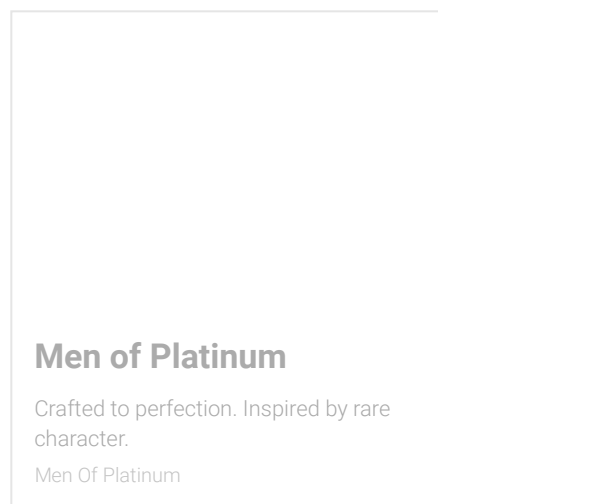
With an apple clocking in at 25 grams of carbohydrates, it can be hard to see how to fit any sweets into the keto diet, but there are a few ways of making a dessert ketogenic-compliant. One is to leave out sweeteners entirely, embracing flavors like raw cacao in its pure and bitter form. The other, frankly more popular and palatable approach, is relying on keto-approved sugar alternatives that are carb-free. These include stevia, monk fruit, erythritol, xylitol, and sucralose, all of which have different pros and cons:

1. Stevia

Stevia is naturally derived from the stevia plant and is available in both powdered and tincture form. Most nutritionists recommend the liquid version, as it undergoes less processing before being packaged for consumers. It's also much sweeter than traditional sugar—although it has no calories or carbohydrates—so you can get away with using less of it. There are, however, a few cons. "A lot of people don't like stevia's aftertaste," says Jessica Cording, a registered dietitian, mbg Collective member, and founder of [Jessica Cording Nutrition](#). "Also noteworthy—in [traditional medicine, it was sometimes used as a contraceptive](#), so if you're pregnant or trying to conceive, talk to your doctor about a safer option." She notes that there are also

some concerns that it could lower blood pressure, which can be dangerous, especially for people already on blood pressure medications. "In that case, it's best to talk to your doctor about any potential interactions," she says.

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2. Monk fruit

Monk fruit is derived from, well, the monk fruit, a gourd-like plant native to China and Thailand. Like stevia, it's much sweeter than natural sugar. While Cording notes one of its benefits is its versatility—it can be used in pretty much any recipe that calls for sugar—she recommends starting with a 1:2 ratio of monk fruit to sugar because of its sweetness. One con? "Sometimes monk fruit is mixed with sugar (for example, maltodextrin or dextrose), so check the ingredients label to see what's in a product," Cording says.

3. Erythritol

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"Erythritol is a sugar alcohol," explains Cording. "These are a naturally occurring class of compounds that actually stimulate receptors on the tongue that pick up sweetness." It's 80% as sweet as sugar and provides about 5% of the calories. It can be used in baking and cooking, although it doesn't dissolve as well as traditional sugars. For keto dieters, there's one big con: "This one has about 4 grams of carbs per teaspoon," says Cording, "which can quickly cut into the allowable amount of carbs per day on a keto diet."

4. Xylitol

Xylitol is a naturally occurring alcohol that's found in many fruits and vegetables (though the type you actually buy in stores is typically extracted from birchwood). It tastes sweet, but it actually helps protect teeth instead of causing them to decay. Xylitol contains about 4 calories and 4 grams of carbs per teaspoon so is lower in calories and carbs than sugar and can be substituted 1:1 for sugar in hot and cold foods. Like erythritol, because of the calories and carbs, it should be added with care to a keto diet if you're trying to keep under a certain amount. One other con: "When used in large amounts, xylitol can have a laxative effect," says Cording.

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5. Sucralose

Also known as Splenda, this is the only sweetener Cording doesn't recommend to her clients. "There are many reasons I'm not a fan of this one. For starters, a few studies have suggested it may produce harmful compounds when exposed to high heat, so it's not a great source for baking or recipes that call for grilling or sautéing," she explains. "Also, though Sucralose itself is calorie-free, Splenda contains maltodextrin and dextrose that contain carbohydrates, so you're looking at about 3 calories and 1 gram of carbs per packet."

The bottom line?

"Whether you're going for a natural or artificial sweetener, as an R.D., I'm most concerned with the behavioral aspect. Because they're so sweet, regularly using them can condition us to become accustomed to (and to crave) very high levels of sweetness, making it difficult to feel satisfied with foods that are naturally sweet," says Cording. "I would recommend going with