

How to Buy Stevia



Shopping for sweetener options can be a scary and overwhelming decision-making process. The number of sweeteners designed to replace sugar is growing by the day. It can make you dizzy standing in sweetener aisle of the grocery store. One blogger counted over 160 options. I can't even keep up!

I keep it simple. I only use a few brands that I know are ok; but I am always on the lookout for new products that might be a major improvement.

When I first started Plan Z, the only option I recommended was Truvia. At that time, Truvia had enough distribution to be in grocery stores all over the country. So our dieters could find it in their local stores – even if they lived in a small town.

Why Truvia?

Truvia is an all-natural sweetener. We ask Plan Z dieters to get off of processed foods, so I needed to find something natural – no chemical experiments.

Two more sweeteners that have come out that I like are ZSweet and Swerve. These are starting to get distribution in stores but you can always find them online. Truvia, ZSweet and Swerve are

granular (their texture is like sugar). You can also find liquid sweeteners that are all-natural too.

If you are looking to expand your sweetener options beyond these, here are a few hints:

1. **Look for all-natural.** There are all kinds of “science experiments” on the market. They are not regulated by the FDA so you have to be wary. If an ingredient ends in the letters OSE it is technically a sugar. Then there are sugar alcohols. Some are naturally occurring and some are modified to be used in food. I am not going to go all “chemistry” on you in this article. I’ll leave that to the scientists and food bloggers. This stuff can get pretty complicated.
2. **Watch out for blends.** Why? Because they are “blended” with sugar! Even Truvia makes a baking blend that is half sugar/half stevia. We will get more into detail on baking later, but you don’t want this if you are trying to stay away from sugar. These blends are a lower calorie option for semi-low carb baking.
3. **Read the labels.** Many sweeteners have all kinds of fillers. Some are ok, some are not. In general, you want as few ingredients as possible. Steer clear of sweeteners with lots chemicals and ingredients you can’t pronounce. As far as these things go, erythritol is okay. It is a sugar alcohol, but it is natural and made from corn. I trust it. If you see Reb A in the ingredients that’s just a version of stevia. Reb A is okay, too.

Which type of sweetener is best for your recipes?

Flavored Sparkling Water

If your goal is to get off of soda, I commend you. There are so many options that are better for you. Even diet soda is a

nightmare. Here's how you can make drinks that taste like soda but are not soda:

Buy plain sparkling water. Pour it into a glass. Then add stevia drops. They will have a few options in the store but if you want to get a myriad of flavors you have to go online. My go-to brand is Sweetleaf. But there are other brands that are just as good.

You can get flavors like cherry and cola. Vanilla drops make a lovely cream soda. That's one of my favorites. They have a lemon-lime that even mimics that favorite soda in the green bottle. Serve over ice and enjoy!

Coffee

If you want to snazz up your coffee, you don't have to buy a flavored creamer with chemicals and preservatives in it. You can buy sweetened drops designed to flavor coffee. Hazelnut and English Toffee flavors are popular. Get them online and add real, full fat cream. You'll be in heaven. The lighter the creamer (think half and half) the more lactose that's in there. That's sugar. That's not helping.

Cold dishes

I recommend making cold dishes with Truvia. Truvia stays stable and measures very much like sugar when it remains cold. For example: if you make broccoli salad and you want the dressing to be a little sweet, this is the time to use Truvia.

Warm dishes

When I first started Plan Z and Truvia was my only option I used it in warm dishes. In most applications it worked, but not always. Sometimes Truvia can have a metallic aftertaste when heated. If the dish you are cooking will chill down to room temperature you might get a "cold" after taste. It's sort of

like you put a menthol lozenge in your mouth. Not great. You can get used to it but now you don't have to. You can use ZSweet or Swerve. You'll have to experiment a bit but from my experience ZSweet and Swerve don't give off that aftertaste. In a dish like a sweet and sour stir fry I still use Truvia, but you might prefer one of the others.

Baking

Low-carb baking has become popular with the Keto crowd. That's great news because now there are many more low-carb recipes online that you can grab and bake. Many mainstream recipes have been adjusted for low-carb dieters, too. So, if you have your grandmother's recipe for sour doughbread you might find a low-carb version online.

If you're trying to convert a recipe yourself, it might be a challenge at first, but it can be done. If you want to dramatically cut back the carbs you have to figure out what flour and what sweetener to use.

There are more flours available than even before. Almond flour is the most popular, followed by coconut flour. But the recipes don't convert one for one. If you are used to baking cakes with white flour and switch to almond flour, your finished cake will be... different. It will be quite a bit denser. It might even resemble a brick! There is a lot of chemistry and detail to baking to get things to come out right. I say just follow someone else's recipe until you start to get the hang of it.

When it comes to the best sweeteners for baked goods, I say use either Swerve or ZSweet. The biggest reason for that is...they caramelize. You know when you bake cookies and they're chewy on the inside but crispy on the bottom? That's caramelization. Swerve and ZSweet take care of that process.

Another bonus is you can get these products in confectioner's sugar so you can make frosting. You can make a yummy cream cheese frosting this way or even fluffier frostings. If the brand you like doesn't come in confectioner form, not to worry. You can put your granular version in a food processor or blender and whiz it until it's broken up to powdered form. Let the powder settle before you open the lid though, or you might sneeze for a few minutes!

To be honest, I have moved away from baking. I'm more likely to make a recipe like the one I am offering you today. Something like a mousse or a fruit parfait are just as popular at dinner parties. Plus, by serving desserts like these, I don't have to put in the time it takes to bake.

You decide what works for your lifestyle. Good news is you can still eat like a king or a queen and not gain weight.

Cheers,