

# AGAVE SYRUP AND NECTAR

The first section of this article came from:

<http://www.drmercola.com/health-tips/7-reasons-why-you-should-avoid-agave-syrup/>

## **7 reasons why you should avoid agave syrup Is Organic Raw Agave Syrup a Healthy Sweetener?**

Agave syrup is a sweetener derived from agave, a desert plant found in the western and southern United States, Mexico, and parts of Central and South America. Agave is more popularly known as the plant used to make tequila but agave syrup (also known as agave nectar) has actually been used for thousands of years as a food ingredient. Mexicans call it *aguamiel* or “honey water” because it is about 40 percent sweeter than sugar.

Because of the increasing awareness of the dangers of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), people have turned to “healthier” sugar alternatives, which is what food manufacturers are marketing agave syrup to be. But don’t be fooled, Dr. Joseph Mercola warns, because agave syrup is actually WORSE than HFCS!

Before anything else, why is fructose so unhealthy for you? First, your body metabolizes fructose very differently from glucose, the form of sugar every cell in your body uses for energy. Fructose is broken down in your liver in the same way as alcohol and is directly converted into dangerous fats, making you, well, fat. Consuming too much fructose is a major risk factor for obesity and weight gain, spikes your uric acid levels and impairs your appetite control mechanism, among other things, Mercola explains.

Here are the reasons why Dr. Mercola believes you should avoid agave syrup like the plague:

1. Agave syrup contains the highest amount of fructose – anywhere between 70 to 97 percent, depending on the brand – among all commercial sweeteners, which is FAR HIGHER than HFCS (55 percent on average).
2. Agave syrup is a highly-processed sweetener. Food manufacturers would like you to believe that agave nectar flows from the agave plant to the jar when in reality, the syrup is produced similarly to how cornstarch turns to HFCS. A natural agave syrup is available in Mexico but it is too expensive to

produce. What you get in the States is either the light or dark syrup – due to poor quality control, some of the product gets burnt and turns dark amber in color.

3. Agave syrup is highly addictive because it's basically a sweeter and highly-concentrated form of sugar.
4. Agave syrup may be a highly sprayed crop. The FDA has rejected shipments of the product due to excessive pesticide residues.
5. Agave syrup has no nutritional value. It is not whole food or a live one. Processing has stripped it of the nutrients contained in the agave plant, and of natural enzymes to prevent it from fermenting into tequila.
6. Agave syrup contains large amounts of toxic steroid derivatives called saponins, which are associated with diarrhea, disruption of red blood cells and vomiting. Saponins also stimulate blood flow to the uterus, which is why pregnant women should avoid agave products due to the possible risk of miscarriage.
7. Agave syrup may contain an organic, heat-formed contaminant called hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF), which has suspected toxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic effects.

Dr. Mercola advises a severely reduced consumption of sugar if you want to improve your health. But if you need to satisfy your sweet tooth, there are healthier alternatives to HFCS and agave. Pure glucose will set you back about a dollar per pound and does not have the harmful effects of fructose when used in moderation. You can also try other health products and natural sweeteners like Lo Han and **stevia**. Again, the keywords are *use in moderation*.

# Agave Nectar

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agave\\_nectar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agave_nectar)



## Production

To produce agave nectar, juice is expressed from the core of the agave, called the *piña*. The juice is filtered, then heated, to hydrolyze carbohydrates into sugars. The main carbohydrate is a complex form of fructose called inulin or fructosan. The filtered, hydrolyzed juice is concentrated to a syrup-like liquid a little thinner than honey and ranges in color from light to dark depending on the degree of processing. The syrup naturally contains quantities of iron, calcium, potassium and magnesium which contribute to the resulting color.

An alternative method used to process the agave juice without heat is described in a United States patent for a process that uses enzymes derived from black mold (*Aspergillus niger*) to hydrolyze the polyfructose extract into fructose. *A. niger* fermentation is "generally recognized as safe" by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

## Composition

Agave nectar consists primarily of fructose and glucose. One source gives 92% fructose and 8% glucose; another gives 56% fructose and 20% glucose. These differences presumably reflect variation from one vendor of agave nectar to another. Due to its fructose content and the fact that the glycemic index only measures glucose levels, agave nectar is notable in that its glycemic index and glycemic load are lower than many other natural sweeteners on the market.

The extremely high percentage of fructose (higher than high-fructose corn syrup) can be deleterious and can trigger fructose malabsorption, metabolic syndrome, hypertriglyceridemia, decreased glucose tolerance, hyperinsulinemia, and accelerated uric acid formation.