

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu**Another New Sweetener on the Shelf**

In our endless search for sweet without calories, we now have another choice on the market. I suppose the deliberate misspelling of the name is to make it very clear that while Shugr™ is as sweet, it really is not sugar. So, what is it made from? Four sugar-related compounds make up Shugr™ - erythritol, maltodextrin, tagatose and sucralose. And despite their chemical-sounding names, the first three are natural products.

Erythritol is a sugar alcohol. It's found naturally in pears, melons, grapes, mushrooms, wine, soy sauce and cheese. It is a little sweeter than sugar but has practically no calories because our bodies can't break it down. That also makes it safe for diabetics. It is eliminated from our bodies by the next day. Unless you eat pounds of it, erythritol won't act like a laxative (thank goodness!) like other sugar alcohols do. Bacteria in our mouths can't use it either, so erythritol does not promote tooth decay.

Erythritol is all ready used in many foods as both a sweetener and to bulk up recipes. When sugar is replaced by artificial sweeteners, in a cookie recipe for example, the recipe makes a lot fewer cookies because all the sugar is gone. However, if something else is added to take up space without adding calories, you can still get the same number of cookies. Erythritol is used for that purpose. It is called a bulking agent because it bulks up, or fills up, the space that sugar used to have.

Maltodextrins are also used as bulking agents. They also help to replace some of the softness and moisture that is lost when fat is removed from a recipe.

Maltodextrins are made from corn starch, and have been in use for years. They are slightly sweet, but the big benefit is that they are digested very slowly, more like starch than sugar. So they can also be used by diabetics.

The third ingredient is tagatose. This sugar is naturally present in milk and dairy products, and is made from milk sugar. It takes up a lot of space like sugar, and is almost as sweet. But like erythritol, our bodies don't use it like sugar. A little bit is absorbed, but most stays in the intestines. There 'good bacteria' use it to keep the intestines healthy and reduce acidity.

It does not make blood glucose levels rise, so it is safe for diabetics to use. It only has 1.5 calories per gram, compared to 4 per gram of sugar. And even though it is made from milk sugar, it doesn't cause the gas or cramps that many people suffer when they drink milk.

The final ingredient is sucralose, or Splenda™. This sweetener is made from sugar, but a tiny bit of chlorine is added so that we can't digest it. Since it doesn't get out of the intestines it doesn't give us calories. It tastes much sweeter than sugar in our mouths, so only a tiny bit is used in Shugr™.

What the researchers did to make Shugr™ is find the right combination of these four ingredients to make something that tastes and acts like sugar, without all the calories of sugar. It has so few calories that it can be labeled 'sugar free'.

Shugr™ can be used for baking and cooking, because none of the ingredients break down in heat. A teaspoon of Shugr™ can be used to replace a teaspoon of sugar. You do have to watch carefully because foods made with Shugr™ will brown faster in the oven. However, given the high price of Shugr (almost \$7 for a quarter of a cup) you might prefer to just use it in your coffee!

Here's a recipe using some of the delicious fall pears in the markets these days. You can use sugar, Shugr™ or Splenda™ in the filling, and replace half the brown sugar in the topping with sweetener if you choose. Add some dried cranberries to the filling for extra color, or chopped nuts for crunch.

### Pear Crisp

#### Filling:

2 C cored and sliced pears	2 tsp fruit juice
1 Tbsp sugar or sweetener	1/4 tsp cinnamon

#### Topping:

1/4 C quick oatmeal	2 Tbsp flour
2 Tbsp packed brown sugar	1/2 tsp cinnamon
1 Tbsp melted margarine	

Preheat oven to 350° F. Spray 8" pan or pie plate with cooking spray.

Combine pears, juice, sugar and cinnamon in bowl, then spread into prepared pan.

Mix oatmeal, flour, sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle evenly over pears. Drizzle melted margarine over topping. Bake for 45 min.

Serves 4.

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