

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Dec 8, 2011

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It's true, the holidays are for celebrating. And food is a big part of our celebrations. For generations, butter and sugar were sure signs of love! They were just too rare and expensive to waste on someone or something that was not special. But just in case someone you love (or you) wants to celebrate *and* keep their health this year, consider trying some ways to reduce the calories.

We are lucky that now we do have options for sweet without the sugar. Years ago the only choice was to never eat sugar again. But now we have two choices for reduced calorie sweeteners that can take the heat of an oven and still keep their sweetness. As my nephew would say (if he cared about calories) "Suu weeeeet!"

The trick of the matter however is that while both Splenda® and Truvia® can be baked, one of the adjustments to our recipes that they require is very different. Other adjustments are similar. Let's start with the differences.

Cookies, cakes and quick breads baked with Splenda® will be done sooner than a standard, sugar-based recipe. These products need to be checked for doneness 3 to 5 minutes early for cookies, 5 to 15 minutes early for cakes or breads. On the other hand, Truvia® products take longer to bake. The Truvia® website recommends lowering the oven temperature by 25° to 50°F and increasing the baking time by 5 to 10 minutes. If you're making a lot of cookies, that could seriously cut into your schedule!

Before we get to the adjustments that are similar for both products, we need to consider what sugar does. Of course it makes things sweet! But it does a lot more than

that. Sugar takes up a lot of space in cake batter or cookie dough. When we replace several cups of sugar with a few tablespoons of sweetener, we have a lot less dough or batter. Even though we measure out the same cups of Splenda®, it's so light and fluffy that it dissolves into practically nothing. That means the cakes and quick breads will be smaller. We won't get nearly as many cookies from a batch as usual. For cakes and breads you can add some extra powdered milk to help take up some space. But that is not as good a substitution in most cookie recipes. Truvia® suggests adding cornstarch to some recipes, but that has as many calories as sugar does. So if you need to have the same amount of goodies to give, you'll need to do extra baking!

Another quality that sugar provides is color. Without sugar our baked goods won't brown. The cookies will be done, but will look pale and pasty. And we won't be able to tell by color when they are done. Both Splenda® and Truvia® recommend using at least a little sugar in the recipe to help browning. Brown sugar, because it has a little color of its own, helps too if the flavor is okay with the recipe. Splenda® also suggests that cakes and quick breads can benefit from a quick squirt of pan spray for some color before they go into the oven.

Sugar is also very important for texture. Sugar helps to hold moisture and keep things soft, moist and chewy, or crunchy and crisp. Without it, cakes and breads will be drier. Cookies will be crumbly instead of chewy or crisp. Truvia® suggests adding cornstarch to help crisp cookies, but it won't make them crunchy. Using part sugar (white, brown, corn syrup or molasses) will help keep cookies and quick breads moister.

If you want to do a lot of baking with reduced calorie sweeteners, the best thing is to find and use recipes developed specifically for the sweetener you prefer. For recipes

for Truvia®, go to <http://www.Truvia.com/recipes>. For recipes for Splenda®, go to <http://www.Splenda.com/cooking-baking>. Here's a light lemon cookie recipe from the Splenda® website. There are lots of others, including chocolate chip! Happy baking!

Splenda®'s Lemon Cornmeal Cookies

½ cup light butter	2 Tbsp oil
¾ C Splenda® granulated sweetener	1 Tbsp vanilla extract
1 Tbsp grated lemon rind	3 Tbsp lemon juice
¼ C liquid egg substitute	1 ½ C all purpose flour
¼ C cornmeal	1 tsp baking powder
1/8 tsp ground nutmeg	

Blend butter, Splenda® and vanilla until butter is softened. Add egg substitute, lemon juice and rind. Mix briefly. Add rest of ingredients and mix unto dough sticks together. Do not over-mix. Divide dough in half and roll each half into a log about 1 inch across. Wrap in plastic wrap and freeze 1-2 hours. Heat oven to 325°F. Lightly oil cookie sheet. Unwrap one log of dough and cut into slices about ¼ inch thick. Lay out on cookie sheet and bake 8-10 minutes until lightly browned. Repeat with rest of dough. The website says this makes enough to serve 27 people, but doesn't say how many cookies each person gets!