



— Food for Health —


Wellness Newsletter

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Eat Real Food

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– Mel Jatsek

Simple Solutions to Avoid Artificial Food Dyes and Sweeteners

Have you ever felt overwhelmed walking through the grocery store, trying to figure out which products are actually better for you? With all the “expert” advice online and confusing claims on product labels, it's easy to become lost.

Here's the good news: Choosing healthy options doesn't have to be so complicated.

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Eat Real Food

What is real food? Whole, unprocessed food from the earth, brought to us by Mother Nature herself: fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices, greens, beans, nuts, and seeds. These foods are the starting point of using food as medicine, as outlined in our Club Fx™ Pillars.

While we may not always be able to stick to the “real food” guidelines mentioned above, we can certainly make smarter choices when we keep that advice top of mind.

Two ingredients that are far from being real food are synthetic food dyes and artificial sweeteners.

Artificial Food Dyes Explained

Synthetic food dyes are made from petroleum-derived substances, which means they do not occur in nature. They have also been associated with potential health risks.

Labeled as Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, *Red 3, Red 40, Yellow 5, or Yellow 6, the mere presence of artificial food coloring in packaged products is a red flag that the food inside is highly processed and of low nutritional value.

Become a label detective and scan the ingredient list for artificial food dyes in products like soda, sports drinks, salad dressings, cereals, condiments, snack foods, mac and cheese, pickles, popsicles, ice cream, applesauce, yogurt, candy, desserts, and more.

The easiest way to avoid food dyes is to opt for brands that use whole fruits and veggies or natural alternatives to color their food. These will show up in the ingredients panel as annatto, beet, paprika, vegetable juice, spinach, spirulina, or turmeric. Yes, all examples of real food!

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SWEET SWAPS FOR HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP

You've probably heard it's best to avoid high fructose corn syrup, but do you understand why or what you should reach for instead? My goal is to reveal the truth about high fructose corn syrup and bring awareness to healthier, more natural sweetener options available at your local Heinen's!

Before digging into the details, you should know that by shopping Club Fx™-approved products at Heinen's you have an automatic partner in your quest for better health. We want you to feel confident making healthy choices for your body, which is why we've labeled hundreds of products across the store with green Fx™-approved buttons. Products bearing this stamp are free of artificial ingredients, including high fructose corn syrup.

What is High Fructose Corn Syrup?

Don't let the fact that it's made from corn fool you. Corn is a whole food; high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is not.

HFCS is derived from cornstarch, which is essentially a chain of glucose (a simple sugar) molecules joined together. The cornstarch is then broken down into individual glucose molecules, creating corn syrup.

To make high fructose corn syrup, enzymes are added to corn syrup to convert some of the glucose to fructose, also called "fruit sugar", because it occurs naturally in fruits. But please don't confuse the two. Fructose in fruit is natural. The fructose in HFCS is not natural because it is made by man manipulating glucose to create a "high" amount of fructose.

The Dangers of High Fructose Corn Syrup

With the manipulation of glucose to create high fructose corn syrup comes a host of potential health problems for humans such as:

- Obesity and weight gain. Because fructose doesn't stimulate insulin secretion or leptin production (the satiety signaling hormone), eating foods with high fructose corn syrup won't help you feel full and can lead to overeating.
- Fatty liver disease. Too much fructose stimulates fat accumulation in the liver, leading to potential fatty liver disease.
- Cholesterol imbalance. High fructose corn syrup can raise the amount of fat in your blood, which will show up in your bloodwork as elevated triglycerides. It can also increase LDL cholesterol (that's the "bad" form of cholesterol.)

It's worth repeating that high fructose corn syrup and the fructose naturally present in fruit are not the same. The fructose in fruit does not cause the negative biological effects of high fructose corn syrup. In fact, fresh fruit offers a healthy dose of fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

How to Spot High Fructose Corn Syrup in Food

Also disguised as fructose, glucose syrup, glucose-fructose syrup, maize syrup, or isoglucose on food labels, high fructose corn syrup can be found in certain brands of soda, juice, candy, applesauce, bread, cereal, baked goods, condiments (ketchup, BBQ sauce, pancake syrup, etc.), spaghetti sauce, and jam/jelly.

Since high fructose corn syrup can be produced at a fraction of the cost of more natural sweeteners, its used in a variety of products. One place you won't find high fructose corn syrup is the Produce Department.

Fx™-Approved Sweetener Alternatives

Look for products that use honey, pure maple syrup, dates, coconut sugar, or molasses instead of high fructose corn syrup. If you'd like to sweeten your foods more naturally, try one of these Fx™-approved sweeteners:

- Heinen's raw honey
- Fresh Energy dates
- Just Date date syrup
- Big Tree Farms coconut sugar
- Heinen's pure organic maple syrup
- Wholesome blackstrap molasses



Key Takeaway

As a dietitian, I spend a lot of time looking at food labels with the majority of my attention on the ingredient list. If a product doesn't pass the ingredient test, nothing else on the label matters. I consider high fructose corn syrup a non-negotiable ingredient because it offers zero health benefits and nothing but potential problems. Do your precious body a favor and make an effort to eliminate this artificial ingredient from your diet as much as possible!

FLAVORFUL MALTODEXTRIN-FREE FOOD AND DRINKS AT HEINEN'S

If you're looking at a food label and wondering if it's a healthy choice, remember this timeless advice: you should be able to pronounce all of the ingredients inside the foods you eat!

The more processed a food is, the more challenging this becomes.

Maltodextrin is one such ingredient hiding in many processed foods. Why? Because it's an inexpensive ingredient that increases the volume and extends the shelf life of products. Read on to learn why you won't find maltodextrin in Fx™-approved foods.

Our Favorite Maltodextrin-Free Products from Heinen's

Maltodextrin is a heavily processed additive made from corn, rice, wheat or potato starch. It appears as a white powder, but when added to packaged foods it is virtually undetectable in both taste and appearance.

While maltodextrin is common in packaged foods, there are plenty of Fx™-approved products at Heinen's that offer delicious flavors and textures without it. Here are just a few of our favorites.

SAUCES

- Rao's pizza sauce
- Siete enchilada or botana sauces
- Heinen's organic marinara sauce
- Heinen's refrigerated pizza sauce

SALAD DRESSINGS

- Bella Sun Luci
- Bragg

SOUPS

- Karine & Jeff
- 18 Chestnuts

SEASONING BLENDS

- Bragg organic sprinkle 24 herbs & spices
- Siete taco seasoning

SNACKS

- LesserEvil popcorn
- Jackson's sweet potato chips
- Quinn Snacks pretzels
- Brad's crunchy kale chips

CANDY

- Hu chocolate bars
- Peaceful Fruits stickers and fruit tape

ENERGY & SPORTS DRINKS

- NOOMA organic sports drinks
- GORGIE energy drinks
- Heinen's coconut water

POWDERED DRINKS

- MacroLife macro greens
- Epic Protein Powder

This list is a great starting point, but there's plenty more to discover! A simple scan of the ingredients in packaged foods will alert you to the presence of maltodextrin. This small investment in time will pay big dividends down the road when it comes to your health.

How Maltodextrin Affects the Body

BLOOD SUGAR

Although classified as a carbohydrate, in the body maltodextrin behaves more like refined sugar—carbohydrate in its simplest form.

As revealed by its glycemic index, maltodextrin actually triggers sharper spikes in blood sugar than table sugar. The glycemic index (GI) is a rating system of carbohydrates based on how much they increase blood sugar. Maltodextrin carries a GI of 110-136, while table sugar's GI is around 65. Keep in mind, the GI scale goes from 0 to 100, so it's fair to say maltodextrin is off the charts!

The spike in blood sugar caused by maltodextrin is followed by a spike in insulin levels, which can trigger energy crashes and sugar cravings later in the day. This isn't a desirable state for anyone, especially those with diabetes, prediabetes, or other health conditions.

GUT HEALTH

Maltodextrin can negatively alter your microbiome by growing more bad bacteria and suppressing healthy, gut-friendly bacteria. This combination can lead to digestive upset, including inflammation, gas, and bloating.

Key Takeaway

There are plenty of additive-free foods at Heinen's! All you have to do is look for them. To avoid maltodextrin, try making a habit of reading food labels or look for the green Fx™-approved buttons on products across Heinen's stores.

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO AVOID ARTIFICIAL FOOD DYES AND SWEETENERS *continued*

Discover these and many other Club Fx™-approved foods at Heinen's that use natural alternatives to artificial dyes:

- Three Wishes Fruity cereal uses vegetable juice.
- Actual Veggies veggie burgers (in the Meat Department and Frozen Department) use beets, carrots, sweet potato and kale.
- Nuts for Cheese Super Blue (in Specialty Cheese Department) uses spirulina to make their Super Blue vegan cashew-based cheese.

*Note: The US Food and Drug Administration banned the use of Red 3 in January 2025, but keep in mind that manufacturers have until 2027-2028 to reformulate their products.

Artificial Sweeteners Explained

Although it can be tempting to reach for lower-calorie products made with artificial sweeteners, I caution you to think twice because these sweeteners can cause sugar cravings, increased hunger, elevated blood sugar, weight gain, and an imbalance of healthy bacteria in your gut.

Artificial sweeteners are common in some brands of flavored yogurt, chewing gum, soda, energy drinks, flavored water, candy, protein powder, nutrition bars, and more!

To spot an artificial sweetener, read the ingredient list for acesulfame potassium, sucralose (Splenda), aspartame (Equal), and saccharin (Sweet-n-Low).

The great news is, just like natural food coloring, Heinen's carries a variety of products with natural Fx™-approved zero-calorie sweeteners like monk fruit extract, allulose, and stevia leaf extract.

Some examples are:

- Quantum nutrition bars
- Protein powder: Ancient Nutrition Multi Collagen Protein or Ancient Nutrition Plant Protein+
- Catalina Crunch cereal
- Zevia zero sugar soda
- Olipop prebiotic beverage (in the Wellness Cooler)

Key Takeaway

Remember the suggestion to “eat real food” and make this mantra the guidepost by which you form your food choices. This way, when you come across a breakfast cereal with Red 40 or Blue 1, a little alarm should sound in your brain that this isn't real food... but turmeric and beets absolutely are!

APPLE CELERY SMOOTHIE

The following recipe and photography was provided courtesy of Recipe Developer and Food Photographer, Allianna Moximchalk from Allianna's Kitchen.



Start your day with a smoothie that will satisfy your taste buds and kick your immune system into high gear!

Servings: 2; Prep time: 5 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 green apples, sliced with the skin on for added nutrients
- 2 sticks of celery, chopped into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 tsp. fresh ginger, grated
- 1 cup unsweetened dairy free nut milk
- 2 cups unsweetened dairy free yogurt

Instructions

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.



Club Fx is a FREE program for Heinen's Tasteful Rewards members that offers education, nutrition tips, product recommendations and recipe inspiration for customers to live their healthiest lives. Interested in becoming a Club Fx member? Update your Tasteful Rewards account to ensure you get our weekly emails and access to personalized nutrition services!