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Naturally Sweet: Bake All Your Favorites With 30% To 50% Less Sugar (America's Test Kitchen)



Synopsis

In this timely, unique cookbook, America's Test Kitchen tackles the monumental challenge of creating foolproof, great-tasting baked goods that contain less sugar and rely only on natural alternatives to white sugar.

White sugar is one of the most widely demonized health threats out there, even

more than fat, and consumers are increasingly interested in decreasing the amount of sugar they use and also in using less-processed natural sweeteners. But decreasing or changing the sugar in a recipe can have disastrous results: Baked goods turn out dry, dense, and downright inedible. We address these issues head-on with 120 foolproof, great-tasting recipes for cookies, cakes, pies and more that reduce the overall sugar content by at least 30% and rely solely on more natural alternatives to white sugar.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've been eating a diet low in sugar for about 5 years, and baking has been one of my greatest challenges. Often desserts come out dry and grainy when baked with less sugar, or they rise too much, or not enough. The ATK recipes control for this, and instead of substituting sugar by any other name, they use much less sugar overall, while also offering substitutions for several popular natural sugars (sucanat and coconut sugar, primarily) and without using chemical substitutes such as sugar alcohols or aspartame. The book covers a wide range of breads, cakes, cookies, and other

desserts or breakfast items. Each recipe has a color photo and detailed instructions that even novice bakers will be able to follow. If you're looking for a book with recipes for sweet treats using far less sugar, this is the book you want.

Having grown up in Europe, I find many American recipes too sweet for my taste. I would always cut down the amount of sugar the recipe asked for mostly with no ill side effects. I pre-ordered this book purely based on the title - well, mainly the subtitle "Bake all your favorites with 30% to 50% less sugar" and my trust in ATK's recipes. I was thinking I'm getting a book with recipes developed using less regular white sugar which I have no problem with. Instead the recipes use more natural sugar alternatives, like Sucanat, coconut sugar (did you know it comes from a sap of coconut palm flower?), honey or maple syrup. At first glance, the recipes look a little more time consuming as they involve grinding the sugar before using it. I had a bit of an issue when grinding the sugar in the spice grinder for the suggested 1 minute caused the grinder to overheat and sugar got stuck to its walls. I guess I might need to shop for a better spice/coffee grinder?? I also couldn't find Sucanat (which my local store used to carry but it does not anymore). The one recipe I tried prior to writing this review were Coconut Washboard cookies. The recipe uses coconut sugar. It wasn't a complete winner. The texture was a little quite dry though they improved greatly once cooled completely. You definitely need a cup of tea or coffee with these like suggested by the headnote. I still want to try a few more recipes before I make my final decision about this book. Using natural sweeteners is a great concept if the recipes work. Next, I need to locate Sucanat which is their preferred sugar. Update and final rating will be coming in a near future.

I have mixed opinions about this lower-sugar cookbook from America's Test Kitchen. The authors do a great job of giving you options when trying to cook lower-sugar recipes in your kitchen. Don't have Sucanat? No problem - the footer of every recipe that calls for Sucanat offers a "Sweetener Substitutions" section, usually involving light brown sugar, coconut sugar, or honey as possible options. Importantly, the test chefs have clearly tested the recipes with these different sweeteners, as different amounts are typically given depending on the sweetener, accounting for differences in taste and behavior during baking. There's a broad selection of different recipes, some are quick and easy, some take a little longer to come together, and some require a little patience while the dough hydrates. Most of the recipes are accompanied by a photo, generally of the finished product, so it's easy to see what you'll be making. As with all ATK recipes, I really appreciate the detailed explanation of why the particular ingredients in the recipe are there and how you'd affect the

finished product by swapping them for something else. Unfortunately, I am disappointed to see that while this book has hopped on the lower-sugar food trend, the authors didn't make the decision to use more whole grains, different fats/milks, etc. I realize this is a book specifically about low-sugar baking, but it seems like there's a disconnect between "sugar is bad for you" and "we're going to use healthier sugars but still rely on white flour, heavy cream, and loads of butter". I haven't met very many people who are concerned about their sugar intake but aren't concerned about their empty carb & high fat dairy consumption at the same time. This is particularly true for people who are pre-diabetic or need to be on a low-sugar diet for some other reason. There have been many fantastic cookbooks focused on lower sugar baking that made sensible use of whole/alternative grains and various alternatives to dairy. I hoped this cookbook would join that list, but sadly, it's kind of a one-trick pony. More unfortunately, and the reason I'm giving this cookbook 3 stars, is I've tried two recipes from it tonight - the honey-oat bundt cake and the fudgy chocolate cookies. Both were quite simple to make, the directions were clear and easy to follow, the authors offered great insight into why the recipe called for specific ingredients... BUT... neither product tasted particularly good. I love honey-oat as a flavor, and the cake batter tasted divine, but once it was baked, the flavors were muted and bland, and the cake itself was dry even though I baked it for the bare minimum time (45 minutes). The cookies fared a little better (it's hard to screw up fudgy chocolate cookies), but I would argue that going from 15 g to 9 g of sugar isn't a huge decrease - these are basically bittersweet chocolate fudge cookies that taste fine, are a pain to mix at the end, are prone to rapidly overcooking (mine needed only 8 instead of the 10 called for), and are unlikely to become a family favorite.

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