



FITNESS FLYER

THE SWEETNESS

By Owen Rothstein

I'm the absolute worst. Ever since I was a little kid, I've had the worst (best?) sweet tooth. My mother used to call me "Cookie Monster" as she indulged me with bag after bag of Chips Ahoy. And, that is the thing... it isn't that I even had a discerning sweet tooth. They didn't have to be homemade chocolate chip cookies; a handful of Famous Amos would do the trick. My current packaged chocolate chip obsession (my sweet tooth is by no means limited to chocolate chip cookies) is Tate's Bake Shop Chocolate Chip with Walnuts, but I digress. The issue/problem is the sugar fixation and trying to overcome it.

Generally, I eat a healthy diet filled with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, clean protein and no artificial junk. I don't cook as much as I would like to, but my prepared foods come from reputable, reliable places and I feel pretty good about them. I eat very little processed foods and tend to focus on slow-burn carbs with a slightly elevated protein mix of about 35-45%. But then...it all falls apart after the meal. I want dessert. I always want dessert. This isn't some high-sugar content thing that sneaks into my food (more about that in a minute) - this is dessert with outright intent. Sometimes a bowl of fruit will do it, but not always. Crème brûlée, panna cotta or anything else custardy holds me powerless. I would venture that most of the sugar in these treats would be considered "added sugar." I tell you that to tell you this...

I'm about to be as firmly entrenched in middle-age as a person can be. My 46th birthday is a little over a week away and, as birthdays tend to spur, I'm taking a look at my life. There are articles everywhere slamming excess sugar in your diet for a myriad reasons that you can look up for yourself. My job helps keep me well-informed on nutrition, but I have been doing a little more reading on added sugar with the advent of the new Nutrition Facts Panels that will start showing up on food products through July 2018. There is a new feature to these panels - "Added Sugar." Here is an excerpt from a Q&A page on the FDA site:

3. Why must "added sugars" now be included?

The scientific evidence underlying the 2010 and the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans support reducing caloric intake from added sugars; and expert groups such as the American Heart Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Institute of Medicine and the World Health Organization also recommend decreasing intake of added sugars.

In addition, it is difficult to meet nutrient needs while staying within calorie requirements if you consume more than 10 percent of your total daily calories from added sugars. On average, Americans get about 13 percent of their total calories from added sugars, with the major sources being sugar-sweetened beverages (including soft drinks, fruit drinks, coffee and tea, sport and energy drinks, and alcoholic beverages) and snacks and sweets (including grain-based

desserts, dairy desserts, candies, sugars, jams, syrups, and sweet toppings).

To further expand on added sugars, the T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard states these facts:

The average American consumes 22 teaspoons of added sugar a day, which amounts to an extra 350 calories. While we sometimes add sugar to food ourselves, most added sugar comes from processed and prepared foods.

The American Heart Association (AHA) has recommended that Americans drastically cut back on added sugar to help slow the obesity and heart disease epidemics.

The AHA suggests an added-sugar limit of no more than 100 calories per day (about 6 teaspoons or 24 grams of sugar) for most women and no more than 150 calories per day (about 9 teaspoons or 36 grams of sugar) for most men.

To put all of this into perspective, one serving of Chips Ahoy (5 cookies) contains 16g added sugar. That's two thirds of the AHA suggested limit for women and over two fifths for men. Throw in a 20oz soda and you're over the top for the day. Sugar in your coffee - that's added sugar. Fruit compote in your packaged yogurt - that's added sugar. Most granola - you guessed it - added sugar.

There is also a ton of ways that sugar has hidden in ingredient declarations, as well. Also according to T.H. Chan, here is a list of some of the ways that added sugar ingredients are listed in food products:

Agave Nectar	Glucose
Brown Sugar	High-Fructose Corn Syrup
Cane Crystals	Honey
Cane Sugar	Invert sugar
Corn Sweetener	Maltose
Corn Syrup	Malt Syrup
Crystalline Fructose	Maple Syrup
Dextrose	Molasses
Evaporated Cane Juice	Raw Sugar
Fructose	Sucrose
Fruit Juice Concentrates	Syrup

The bottom line is that, if like me, you want to be able to enjoy those dessert moments, you'll likely have to be that much more vigilant in watching for added sugar elsewhere throughout the day. I'm going to check out the new panels, keep myself informed and maybe even squeeze in a bit more exercise to keep my sweet tooth alive and well.



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