



Diann's Herb Newsletter

SUMMER 2009

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The International Herb Society selects the Herb of the Year. Here are a few from the past plus this year's:

2009 Bay Laurel
2008 Calendula
2007 Lemon Balm
2006 Pelargonium
2005 Oregano
2004 Garlic
2003 Basil
2002 Echinacea
2001 Sage
2000 Rosemary

Behave so the
aroma of your
actions may
enhance the
general sweetness
of the atmosphere.
--Henry David Thoreau

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Stevia—A Revolution in Sweetness

In your sweetener bowl you can now add to the white, pink, blue, and yellow packets, the green packet—Truvia or Purevia. Truvia is Cargill's (Coca Cola) contribution to available sweeteners; PepsiCo has followed with PureVia. Both are derived from stevia—300 times sweeter than sugar. Previously, stevia was sold only in health food stores as a dietary supplement; however, despite some early resistance, in December of 2008 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decided to allow this sweet herb, a natural and cheap product, on the market as a food item.



Most non-sugar sweeteners are not natural, and the jury is out on how these manipulated and unnatural substances affect our health. No matter what the assurances may be about their safety, our inner wisdom tells us that food which occurs naturally is always healthier than those with chemically-altered ingredients. People in other parts of the world have used this herb for centuries without any adverse effects. The plant (*Stevia rebaudiana*) is named for Dr. Rebaudi, a Paraguayan chemist, who did the first chemical assessment of the herb in the late 1800s. In 2006 the World Health Organization determined that stevia is neither toxic nor carcinogenic and actually has beneficial effects for type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Clinical studies in Brazil have validated stevia's use for blood sugar disorders. Other medicinal uses are also being studied.

Stevia is available in many forms and will be increasingly visible on the grocery shelves. **Steviosides**, commonly called white stevia or pure steviosides extract, offers a wide range of products, including clear liquid extract, spoonable powder, quick-dissolving tablets, and convenient packets, each with versatile applications. **Dark liquid extract** has an intense flavor, with a slight aftertaste of licorice (stevia's natural flavor) and a wide diversity of uses. The quality of the stevia products you buy depends on the quality of the steviosides it contains. Therefore it pays to read the labels. Generally the product should contain a stevioside content of 85% and a rebaudioside (another compound of stevia) content of 15%. Some manufacturers add fillers, usually in the form of

I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving he can outwit nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority.
--E.B. White

maltodextrin, dextrose, lactose, fructo-oligosaccharides) or erythritol, a white granulated powder derived from fruits and grains.

Cooking with stevia is going to take some experimenting for all of us. Although stevia is stable up to 392 degrees Fahrenheit, making it great for cooking and baking, baking with stevia is going to be tricky. Here are some hints. If you're using powdered stevioside, thoroughly mix it with the dry ingredients before adding any liquids. Conversely, if you're using liquid stevioside, thoroughly mix it with other liquid ingredients before adding it to dry ingredients. Stevia works well with dairy products, as well as flavorings such as vanilla, maple, and lemon. Stevia doesn't work in recipes that require caramelizing.

Try substituting stevia for sugar. Here are some guidelines: For one cup sugar, substitute 1½ Tbls stevia powder or 1 tsp stevia liquid. For 1 Tbls sugar, use 6 to 9 drops stevia liquid. For 1 tsp sugar, use 2 to 4 drops stevia liquid.

You may also use **fresh or dried leaves** (whole or crushed) in teas and sauces, but since the leaves don't dissolve, they're less useful in baking. **Plants** are available at Diann's Greenhouse. Stevia grows well in most climates. In our Zone 6b it is a tender perennial.

With almost 50% of the alternative sweetener market in Japan today commanded by stevia and with increased consumer availability in the U.S. we may be on the cusp of stevia's becoming a major food additive. Try the included recipes or substitute stevia for sugar in your favorite dish and let us know how you liked it at <http://www.diannsgreenhouse.com>.

--Information in the above article about stevia and the recipes below were taken from *The Herb Quarterly*, *The Herb Companion*, and the *International Herb Association* and the *American Herb Society* newsletters.

2009 Herbal Workshops

The following 2009 herbal workshops still have spaces available:

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| July 17 | Enjoying Herbal Teas and Desserts |
| September 14 | Making Herbal Oils and Vinegars |
| October 13 | Decorating with Dried Herbs |

Check www.diannsgreenhouse.com or call me for details of these workshops (931-648-8701).

Recipes

French Toast

1 tsp stevia blend (or ½ tsp stevioside or 2 packets stevia)
2 large eggs, beaten
¼ tsp cinnamon
½ cup milk
5 thick slices French bread
½ tsp vanilla
butter or cooking oil

Beat together eggs, milk, vanilla, stevia, and cinnamon in a shallow bowl. Dip the bread into the egg mixture, letting it soak for 30 seconds on each side. Heat a small amount of butter or oil and cook bread for 2 to 3 minutes on each side until golden brown.

Blueberry Syrup

½ cup apple juice
1 cup blueberries
2 tsp stevia blend, or ¼ tsp stevioside, or 4 packets of stevia
1 ½ tsp cornstarch
1 Tbls lemon juice
1 Tbls butter

In a blender or food processor, combine the apple juice and berries, blending until pureed. In a heavy saucepan, combine the puree, stevia, and cornstarch and mix well. Cook until thick and bubbly, stirring constantly. Continue cooking and stirring for 2 more minutes, then remove from heat and add lemon juice and butter. Makes 1 cup.

Peanut Butter Cookies

2 Tbls stevia blend, or ¾ tsp stevioside, or 12 packets stevia
1 ½ cups flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp baking powder
½ cup butter
¾ cup creamy peanut butter
1 egg
¼ cup milk
1/2 tsp vanilla

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Combine stevia, flour, baking soda, and baking powder in a small bowl. In a larger bowl, combine butter and peanut butter; beat until fluffy. Beat egg, milk, and vanilla into peanut butter mixture, then slowly add dry ingredients to wet ingredients. Beat until well combined. Roll pieces of dough into 1-inch balls and place 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Flatten with a fork in a crisscross pattern. Bake for 7 to 9 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.

Life is uncertain.
Eat dessert first.
--Ernest Ulmer