

Monk Fruit Sweeteners

Everything You Need To Know About Monk Fruit Sweeteners

You may have noticed monk fruit sweeteners popping up in conversation or on your favorite food blogs. Following decades of use in areas where monk fruit grows, this natural no-calorie sweetener is now more widely available. Below, IFIC Foundation provides science-based answers to some of the most common questions about monk fruit sweeteners.

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What is monk fruit?

Monk fruit, also known as *lo han guo*, is a small round fruit grown in Southeast Asia. It has been safely used for centuries in Eastern medicine as a cold and digestive aid, and now it is also being used to sweeten foods and beverages. Monk fruit sweetener is created by removing the seeds and skin of the fruit, crushing the fruit, and collecting the juice. The fruit extract, or juice, is around 150-200 times sweeter than sugar and contains zero calories per serving – meaning a very small amount provides a lot of sweetness.

“Using no-calorie sweeteners such as monk fruit in place of regular sweeteners can help you reduce your total daily calorie intake, keeping you within your calorie budget.”



How many calories are in monk fruit sweeteners?

Monk fruit sweeteners contain zero calories per serving. However, some foods and beverages containing monk fruit sweeteners may contain other ingredients that add calories. Foods and beverages using monk fruit sweeteners in place of regular sweeteners generally contain fewer calories and are often labeled as “light” or “reduced calorie.”

Is monk fruit safe to use as a sweetener?

Yes, monk fruit sweeteners can be safely consumed as part of a balanced diet. Governments in the U.S., Canada, China, Japan, and Singapore have concluded that monk fruit sweeteners are safe for the general population, including children, people with diabetes, and women who are pregnant or nursing. In the U.S., monk fruit sweeteners are Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reviewed the published research, listened to expert opinions and, based on the evidence, has no objections to ingredient maker determinations that monk fruit sweeteners are safe for use in foods and beverages.





Do monk fruit sweeteners cause weight gain?

No. Monk fruit sweeteners contain zero calories per serving and do not cause weight gain. In fact, research has shown that using low- or no- calorie sweeteners such as monk fruit sweeteners in place of regular sweeteners can help you lower your total daily calorie intake, keeping you within your calorie budget. Remember that foods and beverages usually contain other ingredients that contribute to calorie intake. To lose weight, the calories you eat and drink must be less than the calories you burn during the day.

How do monk fruit sweeteners fit into a healthful diet?

Monk fruit and other no- and low-calorie sweeteners can help with calorie and carbohydrate management when used in place of sugar or other full-calorie sweeteners (like honey or agave syrup). Foods and beverages containing monk fruit sweeteners can expand lower calorie and carbohydrate options for those trying to manage weight by consuming fewer calories, as well as people with diabetes who are trying to consume fewer carbohydrates and sugars.

Are monk fruit sweeteners safe for children?

Yes. FDA-permitted monk fruit sweeteners are safe and useful options for children and teens and can be included as part of a well-balanced diet. Incorporating some low-calorie, sugar-free foods and beverages into meals and snacks is one way to avoid consuming excess calories. Health professionals, including Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs), can help parents and their children make the best choices based on a child's individual calorie and nutrition needs.

Can people with diabetes consume monk fruit sweeteners?

Yes. Since monk fruit is a no-calorie sweetener, it will not affect blood sugar levels and may be a good option for people with diabetes for reducing their total carbohydrate and sugar intake. Remember, a food or beverage containing monk fruit sweeteners may still have calories and carbohydrates, so always check the food label. If you're unsure how foods and beverages with monk fruit sweeteners fit into your diabetes care plan, consult a health professional such as an RDN, certified diabetes educator (CDE), and/or your health care provider.



Can pregnant and breast feeding women consume monk fruit?

Yes. Research has shown that consuming monk fruit sweeteners is safe for expecting or nursing mothers when consumed as part of a healthful diet. Pregnant and nursing women should talk to their health care provider or RDN about consuming the necessary calories and nutrients for their baby's growth.

“Foods and beverages containing monk fruit sweeteners can expand food choices for those trying to manage weight as well as people with diabetes.”





Monk Fruit Sweeteners at a Glance

Common names seen on food labels.....	Monk fruit, <i>lo han guo</i>
Brand Names.....	Nectresse™, Purefruit™, Fruit-Sweetness™, Monk Fruit in the Raw®, and other store brands
Date Permitted in Foods and Beverages in the U.S.....	July 2009
Number of times sweeter than sugar.....	150-200
Safe for children?.....	Yes
Safe for pregnant and breast feeding women?.....	Yes
Safe for people with diabetes?.....	Yes
Use in cooking or baking?.....	Yes

“**Monk fruit juice is around 150-200 times sweeter than sugar, meaning a very small amount provides a lot of sweetness.**”

Products That May Contain Monk Fruit Sweeteners

Foods and beverages in the U.S. that may contain monk fruit sweeteners include certain:

- Tabletop sweeteners
- Beverages (flavored waters, juices, teas, sodas, etc.)
- Baked goods (pastries, cereal bars, cookies, etc.)
- Yogurts
- Sauces (salad dressings, jams/jellies, etc.)
- Desserts and candies (ice cream, chocolate, hard candy, etc.)

For more information on monk fruit and other low-calorie sweeteners, visit www.foodinsight.org



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