

The Stevia Cookbook: Cooking With Nature's Calorie-Free Sweetener

Donna Gates

Ray Sahelian

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Is there a healthy substitute for sugar that has zero-calories, is diabetic-friendly, safe for children and does not cause cavities? Yes. It is stevia, a shrub native to South America, and now being grown in China and Japan. Nature has not kept it hidden, but the United States government has. Authors Gates and Sahelian have added to the political brew by preparing the stevia bible of facts and history, which includes a complete variety of rich and rare recipes, for Americans.

The book is divided into two sections. Part One tells the story of stevia, with facts, history and progress. "The stevia rebaudiana, a member of the daisy family, grows naturally in South America, with over 150 species believed to exist. Stevia rebaudiana is the sweetest of the varieties —estimated to be 300 times as sweet as table sugar." Stevia is named after Paraguayan chemist, Rebaudi, who was the first to extract the chemical sweetener in the 1880s.

In 1991, The Food and Drug Administration labeled stevia an "unsafe food additive" and issued an alert that blocked the importation of stevia into the United States. But for several months, health food stores continued to sell stevia. It sold well, but supplies ran out. It was then that Gates culled and researched all that was available on stevia including FDA reports and studies. "To date, there has not been one report in plant toxicity by consumers," which includes South American Natives who have consumed stevia for many centuries and the Japanese who have used it in their food packaging since the mid-1970s.

Part Two offers over 100 recipes divided into eight categories: Stevia Sunrise Breakfasts; Salads and Dressings; Satisfying Entrees and Side Dishes; Sauces, Frostings and Other Toppings; Heavenly Cakes and Pies; Homestyle Cookies, Candy, and Ice Cream; Luscious Custards, Puddings and Fruit Treats; and Sweet Drinks. While most of the recipes are clearly health food, a significant amount are vegetarian-friendly.

The authors bring a wealth of credentials to this well-prepared compendium. Dr. Sahelian holds a bachelor's degree in nutrition and a degree in medicine, is an internationally recognized physician and has written more than ten books including *The Common Cold Cure*. Donna Gates is a widely known nutritional consultant; she also combines her knowledge of modern medicinal science, ancient Chinese medicine and naturopathy for insight into health problems. She is author of *The Stevia Story*.

The Stevia Cookbook offers sweet and healthy alternatives.

NANCY TAMBURELLO (July / August 1999)

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