






Newsletter

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Danville, CA . Henderson, NV . San Antonio, TX . Boston, MA . Jupiter, FL

Agave from the Mojave

By Dena Guzman

Sweet is the most preferred flavor of the human tongue. In nature, sweet food equals good food. Bitter means bad. As pointed out in our previous articles on sweeteners, Children of the Corn Parts One and Two, the quest for sweet is an age-old journey and one humans have always risked life, limb and even health in order to savor the flavor.

What are our choices for a “healthy” sweetener, or at least one that is less harmful?

High fructose corn syrup is likely considered “no brainer” as not the healthiest choice. Refined sugar is arguably just a bit better than HFCS, and evaporated cane syrup, which is a bit controversial in its own right. We cannot forget the old standbys; honey and maple syrup, which according to who one would believe, are no different in the body than sugar. More recently we find stevia being widely offered, but to many it is too distinctive in flavor and sometimes difficult to cook with.

So what’s left? There are several options but agave nectar has established itself in recent years as a contender due to a neutral flavor, comparative healthfulness, low impact farming and processing, and ease of use (it even dissolves rapidly in cold drinks, making it an ideal tea sweetener).

Agave nectar comes from the agave (pronounced, a-GAH-vay) plant, a spiky succulent that grows in Mexico. It is best suited to volcanic soils and hot, sunny climates. The plant has been used for various applications for thousands of years.

Agave nectar is sweet... nearly 1.5 times sweeter than table sugar.

See Agave Page Two



Not that long ago it was difficult to find agave, or products formulated with agave, anywhere but in one of its favorite uses, tequila.

Now it is appearing regularly on supermarket shelves, and not just in the natural channel.



MORNING ESPRESSO

A little something to wake up with

Fresh & Easy Announces Store Closings

Announced as temporary... [Click to Read](#)





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This makes lowered consumption and moderation much easier. A few drops of agave versus 1.5 times as much sugar means less of the stuff that links all processed sweeteners with negative health side effects. Despite the fact that a sweetener is a sweetener, and therefore inherently meant to be consumed sparingly, agave is a natural sweetener that comes from an easily renewable resource, and that takes comparatively little energy to produce and refine.

Agave plants have been used for ceremonial purposes, drinks, tequila and liqueurs, building materials, paper, fuel and much more for thousands of years. Historically revered primarily because the plants provide a source of liquid in dry, arid lands, they have been put to many good



uses as civilization has progressed.

However, agave nectar is a newer creation and is indeed processed and this very fact has created a bit of controversy in the health food

sphere. It seems that some expect a bottle of sticky sweetness produced by a grandmother in Southern Mexico from a vat of stewing agave leaves and some expect the reality: a commercially processed but naturally refined food.

Let's take a quick look at the process of obtaining the final product from the agave plants, which are collectively known as *maguey*, including the species *Salmiana agave* and the *agave Tequilana*, or blue agave. Both species are available under USDA certification as being organically grown in Mexico. Most agave is produced within the Mexican state of Jalisco.

After pollination, sometimes by a bat that is native to Mexico, the process of making commercially ready agave nectar from an agave

plant varies by species. Juice is s o m e t i m e s expressed from the core of the agave, called the *piña* and is slightly heated to produce a

sugary syrup that is then concentrated to a denser syrup. Differing grades, or colors, come from different degrees of processing... the less filtered, the darker the nectar. Agave is generally produced at such low heat that many raw foodists consider it to be an acceptable raw food.

The other common method of agave production is to take the *quiote*, or the stalk of an agave plant, remove it and collect the liquid that gathers where the stalk was. This liquid is called *aquamiel*, or 'honey water,' and is treated with enzymes to produce the sugars (fructose and dextrose) that will be processed into the final product agave nectar.

In a forthcoming issue of the OFI newsletter, we will explore the many commercial and home uses for agave, and we will seek interviews with leading industry experts and agave-sweetened foods pioneers to weigh in on the benefits of this extraordinary plant.

Sources:

[All About Agave](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

[Wellsphere](#)

[DocStoc](#)



Key Item Organic P/L Price Survey

Reported January, 2009 from, Phoenix, AZ, Minneapolis, MN, Florida, and Henderson, NV

We are looking for your recommendations to add (or subtract) organic private label items from our monthly survey.

At least monthly, OFI personnel will gather pricing from around the country on key organic private label items at key retailers: Whole Foods, Safeway, Kroger, Trader Joe's, and Fresh & Easy (Tesco). N/O will denote "Not Observed" meaning we did not see the product or a tag, but cannot verify if it is an authorized item. All prices are converted to match






the size shown in the head column to the left. 0.00/0.00 denotes retail over feature price where promotion is in effect. 0.00 represents a price change that is higher, and 0.00 represents a price change that is lower than last reported. All prices are observed, but not necessarily confirmed by purchase. All information gathered is observed at retail, and in no way compromises confidential information at any time. Special circumstances or product differentiation will have a footnote. OFI assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of this information. Prices for different items in different stores may be the result of observed prices in the same retailer, but

Product/Description	Whole Foods	Vons	Kroger	Trader Joe's	Fresh and Easy
Milk 2%, 1/2 Gal	3.29	3.69	3.29	3.29	3.29
Soy Milk, 1/2 Gal. refrigerated	2.99	3.09	2.50	2.99	2.69
Butter, 1 lb.	4.79	5.49	4.59	4.79	N/O
Eggs	3.99	4.39	N/O	3.99	3.99
Whole Grain Bread, bag	2.69	3.29/3.49	N/O	2.79	N/O
Lettuce, Green Leaf	1.49	N/O	N/O	N/O	N/O
Tomatoes, 1 lb.	2.99	N/O	2.79	N/O	N/O
Carrots, 1 lb.	N/O	1.09	0.95	N/O	1.49
Pasta, Spaghetti, 1 lb cello bag	1.99	2.19	2.79	1.29	1.29
Pasta Sauce, 25 oz.	2.99	3.00/3.50	3.69	2.29	2.99
Soy Milk, Aseptic	1.69	N/O	N/O	1.69	N/O
Cereal, Oat O's (10 oz.)	3.65	N/O	N/O	1.55	1.98
Cookies, ChocoChip, 12 oz.	3.69	N/O	N/O	N/O	N/O
Jam, Strawberry, 1 lb.	3.10	N/O	N/O	4.30	1.44
Olive Oil EV, liter	12.99	16.49	14.58	12.98	13.98
Coffee, various sizes (1 lb. convers)	9.32	N/O	9.86	8.60	7.84
OJ 64 oz., Not from concentrate	N/O	4.48	N/O	5.49	N/O
Beef, Top Sirloin	N/O	N/O	N/O	N/O	N/O
Chicken Breast, 1 lb.	9.99	8.99	7.99	6.99	N/O
Salad Dressing, 8 oz	2.49	2.96	2.79	1.99	2.00
Broth, Chicken, Aseptic 12 oz.	1.99	1.32	N/O	1.99	N/O
Apple Juice, 64 oz.	3.99	4.39	3.99	2.99	3.59
Frozen Corn, 16 oz. bag	1.99	N/O	N/O	1.69	1.59
EcoFriendly Laundry, 128 oz.	10.99	N/O	N/O	8.99	N/O
Wheat Crackers	3.49	N/O	N/O	N/O	N/O
Peanut Butter, 18 oz.	3.49	3.49/3.89	3.99	3.36	3.42
Sugar, 24 oz.	2.25	2.88	1.99	2.09	2.78

What Can OFI do for Your Brand?

Our clients include major retailers and wholesalers, known brands, small brands, start ups, and manufacturing operations.

Our services include:

-  Assessment
-  Brand positioning
-  Sourcing
-  QA/QC evaluation
-  Organic certification advice and direction
-  Brand building
-  Label development
-  Contract manufacturer selection
-  Valuation
-  Broker Services

See our contact information on Page 7 of this newsletter.





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Questions and Comments

We welcome reader questions and comments, and ideas for the newsletter. Please write to us at info@organicfoodsinternational.com.

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Just one more thing ...

Kroger Looks to Acquire PL Manufacturing Firms

Is this a case of "Back to the Future?"

[Read More at Reuters](#)