Sweetening America’s Food and Beverage Supply: The Role of High-Fructose Corn Syrup

High-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) was first introduced to the food and beverage industry in the late 1960’s; by 1985, it surpassed sucrose (table sugar) as the most utilized sweetener in America.

Why is HFCS such a popular sweetener?

**HFCS:**
- Is economical
- Is a thin liquid that blends in well with many food products
- Attracts moisture and keeps products from drying out
- Is concentrated, which helps keep bacteria from growing
- And its use supports America’s corn industry and farmers

However, HFCS has come under scrutiny in the past decade for being a contributor to America’s obesity problem. Because of this negative press, the food industry began using sucrose in place of the corn product HFCS in many cases, which hurt the corn industry. Research has since become available dismissing the claims that HFCS is linked to obesity, and the corn industry has launched a campaign to win back the favor of the American public.

So, is HFCS really all that bad?

The short answer to this question is no, HFCS is not any worse for you than table sugar (sucrose). HFCS is made from corn; a reliable and plentiful natural resource. It is a nutritive sweetening agent and is composed of the carbohydrate units glucose and fructose. HFCS is equal in calories (containing about 4 calories per gram) and almost identical in composition to table sugar; it also has nearly the same sweetness factor.

The general consensus among researchers is that:

1. HFCS and table sugar are not very different from each other.
2. HFCS does not cause obesity by itself; rather, a high-fat, high-calorie diet and a low physical activity level can lead to obesity.
3. HFCS consumption does not predict whether a person will be obese or not.
4. Taking HFCS out of the diet will not significantly decrease obesity rates.

Like any food, Americans should eat foods sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup in moderation. A well-rounded diet complete with lots of physical activity is the best solution!
References

Corn Refiners Association, www.sweetsurprise.com


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