

## It's not my Grandmother's Cookies Anymore

By Deb Landry

When and how much sugar do you give your children? First, I want to say that everything in moderation but with that said, I try not to buy anything that has processed sugar in it. Because I have always struggled with my weight and cravings for the white gold, I decided not to give my children sugar until after they were two years old. It worked. To date my teens will still pick an apple over apple pie and juice or milk over soda.

Great natural sweeteners do exist! Natural sweeteners that don't raise the blood glucose levels are great alternatives for any of us who want a little sweetness without the sugar high.

Agave, pronounced: (uh-gah-vay) is my favorite. Agave Nectar is a delicious low glycemic natural sweetener from the agave cactus plant. Its light flavor does not interfere with any other flavors and it can be used in cooking, unlike artificial sweeteners that lose their sweetness when heated or have a distinct after taste. It is an excellent alternative for people who wish to limit their intake of sugar and sugar substitutes. This cactus-like plant hails from Mexico and is a sweet sticky juice (texture of honey, lighter in color) which is nearly 90% fructose, is sweeter (I have read 1.5 to 4 times sweeter) than white sugar, so less is needed. When I cook with it, I cut it in half.

In Mexico, agave was considered a sacred plant. The Indians believed the liquid from this plant purified the body and soul. When the Spaniards arrived, they took the juices from the agave and fermented it to make tequila, no wonder I like it so much!

Agave doesn't alter the flavor of smoothies, cookies, tea, ice tea or coffee. Yes cookies, I have been substituting it for baking. I make my chocolate chip cookies with Agave now, eliminate the white sugar, but still use the brown sugar. I also found a recipe book, which I use all the time.

Caloric intake is the about the same but you use half so it turns out to be less. I get mine at Shaw's in the natural food section, but I think you can get it just about anywhere and always in health food stores.

Let me warn you it does cost more, but worth the healthy alternative and you use half as much. My kids love it. Other healthy alternatives are maple syrup and honey.

My second favorite food to use a substitute for is mayo and salad dressing. My secret: Greek yogurt. It has a very different texture than regular yogurt. Use it in any recipe that calls for mayo, salad dressing, and cream cheese, reduce it by a few tablespoons and add some mayo just for extra taste. It's great for dips, dressings or just to eat with fruit.

Here's a great recipe for a salad dressing:

1 cup of Greek yogurt  
1/4 cup mayo of choice  
1/4 cup parmesan cheese  
garlic clove  
salt to taste  
1/2 tablespoon of Agave nectar (from above)  
Mix up set aside and a great homemade dressing.

Thousand Islands or any mayo based dressing are also great made with this yogurt, just substitute the mayo for yogurt, less calories, great taste and better for you. You'll never buy salad dressings again.

With that all said, I'm sharing an old family recipe with you in honor of my newly released book, *The Snapdragon Princess*, written with Kim Parrish and illustrated by Christina St. Cyr. Making molasses cookies with my grandmother was one of my fondness memories. Yes, Agave can be substituted.

Here's a sneak preview of the press release going out next month:

National television host Kim Parrish and best-selling children's book author Deb Landry explore how role models can be found in our ordinary, everyday lives. ***The Snapdragon Princess*** (Bryson Taylor Publishing, ISBN 978-0-9773738-6-4) launches in August nationwide.

***The Snapdragon Princess***, for ages 6-11, revives the legacy of a real princess in a delightful intergenerational story of family treasures, enchantment and cherished times gone by. McKenzie is an astonishing young girl who dreams of becoming a princess. With the help of her grandmother, she embarks on a journey and discovers that being a real princess is much more than crowns and dress-up.

"Discovering that ordinary people can do extraordinary things, ***The Snapdragon Princess*** encourages us to look within our own families and communities to hear stories of inspiration and find our real life role models," said Kim Parrish, co-author. "I wanted to write this book because I've seen too many people seeking role models in all the wrong places. Celebrities and athletes shouldn't be the only ones inspiring our children - we should be their inspirations also."

If you would like more information on my new book visit: [www.bryontaylorpublishing.com](http://www.bryontaylorpublishing.com)