

# Munch ON THIS



## ***Eat It and Wear It***

*By Marcia Rae  
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The meteoric rise in the consumption of high fructose corn syrup directly coincides with the epidemic of obesity, both dating back to 1970. One study, by Children's Hospital Boston, found that for every additional 8 ounces of soda, a kid's risk of obesity increases 60%. And along with obesity, chalk up higher triglycerides, bone loss, insulin resistance, impaired glucose tolerance, high insulin, and higher blood pressure.

The sugars we eat come in three basic forms – glucose, sucrose, and fructose – and a fourth hybrid child, high fructose corn sweetener, known in the industry as HFCS.

Glucose (sometimes called dextrose) is found in the sap of plants and the human bloodstream. It requires no digestion and is absorbed in the intestine and distributed to all the cells of your body, or converted to glycogen and stored in the liver and muscles, then reconverted back into glucose when needed to keep the blood sugar levels constant. We need glucose in our bloodstream, not too much and at a nice even rate.

Sucrose is a carbohydrate found in all fruits and vegetables. We usually refine it from sugar beets and sugar cane into familiar white table sugar. First invented by the Polynesians about 560 B.C., it was, of course, spread by the Arabs in the sixth century, but did not reach Europe until the Crusades in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. No doubt, this "white gold" has been instrumental in the development of civilizations and waging of wars since food is our most pervasive drug of choice and sweet is a powerful motivator.

Fructose, also known as crystalline fructose, is a component of sucrose and is found in nature in honey, tree fruits, melons, berries, and some root vegetables. The body can easily handle fructose coming at it from whole fruits and vegetables. However, while glucose is absorbed directly, fructose is handled by the liver. And when too much enters the liver too fast, the liver cannot process it and instead sends it into the bloodstream as triglycerides, resulting in heart disease. Fructose also does not signal the appetite that you have had enough, leading to overeating.

Then, in the 1960s, we invented (partly because of world politics and sugar tariffs) high fructose corn sweetener (not at all to be confused with fructose). Made in a complicated process from corn, it combines fructose and glucose in a form not known to our bodies before. Consumption has rocketed from 0 to 70 pounds per year per person. Look at the label on almost any processed food, and it is likely to be there. It is the main ingredient in soft drinks and other sweet beverages. That latte you just drank? Think HFCS. It is everywhere. It is sneaky. We are hooked on it.

The kicker? The federal government subsidizes the production of HFCS. HFCS producers -- including the dominant one, Archer Daniels Midland -- saved \$2.2 billion between 1997 and 2005. 1.2% of all U.S. cropland harvested in 2007 went for high fructose corn syrup. Only 1.5% was devoted to vegetables and 1.6% to orchards.

What to do? Stop drinking pop. Start reading labels. Kick the habit. Get your sugar the natural way. Eat fruits and vegetables. You will find them at the Brownsville Farmers Market and on line at [WillametteLocalFoods.com](http://WillametteLocalFoods.com).

Munch on This – Why does the federal government subsidize high fructose corn syrup instead of fruits and vegetables?

PS – See you at the Farmers Market this Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon, for real local food, not HFCS. Music is Mitch Ridinger and Craig Lunsford.

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