

Non-Nutritive Sweeteners

The FDA has approved five non-nutritive sweeteners as food additives. These sweeteners are evaluated based on their safety, sensory qualities, and stability in various foods. All of the sweeteners are found on the FDA GRAS list –**Generally Recognized As Safe** – and have Acceptable Daily Limits (ADI).

Saccharin – Saccharin has been around for over 100 years and claims to be the most researched sweetener. It is also known as Sweet and Low, Sweet Twin, Sweet’N Low, and Necta Sweet. It is 200-700 times sweeter than sugar. Saccharin does belong to a class of compounds known as sulfonamides, which can cause allergic reactions in people who cannot tolerate sulfa drugs.

Aspartame – Aspartame was approved by the FDA in 1981. Unlike saccharin, aspartame does provide calories. However, because it is 160-220 times sweeter than sugar, the amount needed to sweeten food is negligible. Aspartame is also known as Nutrasweet and Equal. Aspartame is the most controversial sweetener with ongoing controversy surrounding its approval and safeness.

Sucralose – Sucralose is the newest non-nutritive sweetener on the market. Manufacturers claim it is made from sugar, but in reality it has a sugar-like structure and is not natural. It does contain calories but is 600 times sweeter than sugar, so a very small amount is needed to reach the desired sweetness. The presence of chlorine is thought to be the most dangerous part of sucralose.

Acesulfame K – Acesulfame K has been an approved sweetener since 1988, but most people don’t even know it is in their food. It is 200 times sweeter than sugar and is used to preserve the “sweetness” of sweetened foods. Acesulfame K does contain the carcinogen *methyl chloride*. Therefore, many people are opposed to its use in food products.

Neotame – Neotame is a new version of Aspartame. It was approved in 2002 and is much sweeter than aspartame. It is 7,000 to 13,000 times sweeter than sugar. Neotame manufacturers claim there are over 100 scientific studies to support its safety, but none of them are readily available to the public. Again, opponents of Neotame continue to refute its use.