

An Alternative Guide to Halloween Candy

Refined sugar feeds pathogens, especially candida. An abundance of candida and other pathogens leads to allergies, diabetes, obesity, and a whole lot more. Unfortunately, we love sugar. We love sugar so much that Americans are planning to spend nearly \$3 billion on Halloween candy this year. The science is in: if you want to be as healthy as possible refined sugar must be eliminated from your diet.

This includes Halloween.

This will be my second Halloween without Halloween candy. Truthfully, I can't say I miss it all that much. I know that's not the case for everyone, so I've put together a guide for some alternatives and ranked them from least healthy to most healthy. Although we have some alternative candies, this isn't an exact trade-in for your favorite candy bars. This is more a guide to satisfy your sweet tooth.

This is not an advertisement. None of the brands below paid us.

Least Healthy

Organic Cane Sugar

Truthfully, I can't believe I still have to include this. Using organic refined sugar and calling it "healthy" is what my dad did 20 years ago. It's dated, and it's not a healthy alternative to regular refined sugar. There was a time when my dad was a radical health nut for eating organic sugar instead of regular sugar, but today, even the least health-conscious people I know who were born within the last 50 years are of the opinion that sugar is sugar. As far as the effects of

sugar on your body, organic cane sugar has the same effect. Organic cane sugar will still feed candida growth in your body!

Coconut Sugar, Brown Rice Syrup, Raw Sugar, and Agave syrup

There are a lot of sugar alternatives out there that are still very high on the glycemic index chart. The only sugar substitutes we use that I recommend are stevia, monk fruit, and dates. I use blackstrap molasses, too, but I don't recommend it for everyone. I mix a teaspoon of molasses with whatever quantity of monk fruit that I'm using to make "brown sugar". Molasses does have some benefits, but it is still a refined sugar. If you use molasses, use it in moderation and pay attention to how it makes you feel.

Read this article to see some alternative sugars and where they rank on the glycemic index chart. I personally have not used any other alternative sweeteners besides the ones I recommend above. In my opinion and experience, these are the healthiest sugar alternatives you can use.

Anything Too Processed

Lately, I've seen a push for Smart Sweets. Smart Sweets is a brand of candy that makes your favorite regular candy like gummy bears and sour patch kids. They are free from sugars and sugar alcohols, they're naturally colored, and gluten-free, as well as free from other common allergens like nuts. They even have vegan options. If I took my kids trick-or-treating and they gave these out, I probably wouldn't tell the kids they couldn't eat them, but it's not an everyday healthy alternative. They're sweetened with monk fruit, and that is a good sugar alternative, however, the candies themselves are just too processed to be considered a great alternative. That being said, these are better for you than regular refined

sugar. So they're not the worst thing you could do. But any naturally sweetened candy like this that is processed into a gummy bear, or sour worm, or anything resembling normal candy, is just too processed to be considered healthy.

Getting There!

Chocolate

They make a multitude of alternatively sweetened chocolate bars out there. We've tried a couple of them, and while they make good alternatives, we wouldn't recommend them for everyday eating.

Lily's Chocolate Bars, and Other Lily's Products

Lily's chocolate bars are sweetened with stevia. It is a good alternative to conventional chocolate bars, but they are cooked and more processed than some other raw or otherwise healthier options. They also contain Soy Lecithin, which is essentially a food emulsifier; it helps the chocolate achieve the right texture. My family and I do eat Lily's chocolate bars occasionally. They also make chocolate chips which are great for baking.

Lily's also makes peanut butter cups. Finding Lily's peanut butter cups was a godsend when I was still craving Reese's Peanut Butter cups. I don't crave peanut butter cups much anymore, and when I do I prefer to make my own! (More on that later) Lily's chocolate has a plethora of sweet alternatives and a multitude of different kinds of chocolate bars. We try to avoid processed foods as much as possible, but Lily's isn't the worst thing you could grab as a treat every once in a while.

Lakanto Monk Fruit Chocolate Bars

Lakanto is the brand of granulated Monk fruit that we use for baking. It's radically better than sugar, but it does have erythritol, which is a sugar alcohol. Sugar alcohol isn't great for you, though a little every once in a while with the help of a healthy gut won't be the worst thing for you. Lakanto also makes chocolate bars, and while I've never personally had them, based on the ingredients, they are also a suitable chocolate bar alternative. Again, they're still a processed food, so not too much!

Honey Mama's Chocolate Bars

Honey Mama's makes raw food chocolate bars out of portland. A raw food chocolate bar is going to be much better for you than a processed chocolate bar. For that reason, these are our favorite. They're made from sprouted almonds, cacao powder, raw honey, and a couple of other ingredients depending on the flavor you get. They melt in your mouth and have the best texture of any candy bar you'll ever have, hands down. There is, of course, one problem. Raw honey is only good in small amounts and is not good if you haven't fixed your gut. If you haven't created a gut microbiome healthy enough to process the sugar from raw honey, then these aren't for you (of course, if your gut isn't healthy enough to process sugar, this is the wrong article for you! What are you doing here? Go make a salad!). Don't cook with these chocolate bars! Heating up honey kills the enzymes and causes it to lose its health benefits- you might as well just eat sugar if you're going to heat up your honey.

Peanut Butter/Nut Butter

We like peanut butter. A lot. If sugar is still a regular part of your diet, you likely won't be able to appreciate a high-quality sugarless peanut butter to its fullest, but trust me,

you're missing out. Most peanut butter isn't good for you. Large scale factory-farmed peanut butter often has peanut mold problems. Additionally, enzyme inhibitors are particularly bad with peanuts. Small scale peanut butter made from sprouted nuts is much better for you, but expensive and often hard to find.

If you're buying nut butter or peanut butter, our favorite nut butter is the Nutt-zo Keto butter. It's got a bunch of nuts and seeds in it and it's fantastic. My dad recently found another good one called Fix and Fogg Everything Butter. But ideally, you should be making your peanut butter/nut butter at home from sprouted nuts. Check out the video below to learn more about making sprouted almond butter, and be on the lookout for a video from us to see how we do it, coming soon.

Most Healthy (Homemade Alternatives)

Homemade Peanut Butter Cups

We use a nut butter and Lily's chocolate chips to make peanut butter cups. I have not made peanut butter cups without Lily's chocolate chips, but since they have soy lecithin, there are better options.

To make peanut butter cups, I like to take a bowl full of peanut butter or nut butter and put it in the freezer to firm up. In the meantime, I melt a bag of Lily's chocolate chips on a double boiler until they're melted. Then I take silicone cup molds, and pour melted chocolate in the bottom, spreading the chocolate up the sides. I roll spoonfuls of the chilled peanut butter into balls and put them in the silicone cups. Then I cover the peanut butter with more chocolate and chill it until it is solid. These peanut butter cups are much better than store-bought because you can add as much or as little peanut

butter and chocolate as you want! Truthfully, I don't know how well these keep because I've never had them survive for more than 30 minutes They're definitely a fan favorite.

Date Balls

You can experiment with different flavor combinations with date balls forever. The simplest way to make them is to put pitted dates in a food processor with nut butter and/or nuts, and a little bit of salt. Blend until you get the right consistency to roll them into balls. You can experiment with adding different nuts, nut butter, seeds, and even berries. Roll them into balls and then roll in chocolate powder, or shredded coconut, or even sliced almonds. The possibilities are endless! I don't make date balls all that often, so I don't have a go-to recipe.

Homemade Honey Mama's Chocolate Bars

If you like Honey Mama's chocolate bars, you should try making your own! They'll be better for you because they're homemade and you can control the ingredients, and you can make them less sweet. (As much as we love Honey Mama's, they're way too sweet). So check out this recipe for homemade Honey Mama's chocolate. Use homemade nut butter from sprouted nuts and as little raw honey as possible for the healthiest version of these bars. I've yet to try it, but I suspect you could use homemade Honey Mama's chocolate bars, with homemade nut butter from sprouted nuts, and make the healthiest peanut butter cups possible.

Homemade Ice Cream

Another one of my favorite desserts is homemade ice cream. Store-bought "healthy" ice cream is expensive, and also, not healthy! At home, we like to make tart berry-banana ice cream, cranberry-banana, raspberry-banana, blackberry-banana, etc. We like to use tart fruits, especially cranberries because

bananas are very sweet. We take 12 bananas, cut them up, and freeze them and our fruit ahead of time. We then pull the bananas out to thaw just a little bit, add 1.5 cups of frozen tart berries, and add salt and cinnamon to taste. Put everything in the food processor and blend to combine for 5 generous servings. This, like most of our recipes, is a loose recipe. Don't be afraid to set guidelines for what is healthy enough and experiment within those guidelines to find a version that you like best.

Pies

Pies are a favorite of ours. We make pie crust using butter, sourdough starter, organic flour, and a pinch of salt. If you find that you still have a problem digesting gluten even after healing the gut, you'll want to use chickpea flour (ideally homemade chickpea flour from sprouted chickpeas) and water instead of sourdough starter.

Add 2.5 cups of your flour and a pinch of salt to a bowl. I recommend Bob's Red Mill organic all-purpose flour if you're using storebought, but personally, I prefer to buy organic local from a farmers market. Then add 1 cup of ice-cold butter. Begin to break up the butter and combine the flour and butter with your fingers into smaller and smaller pieces, until you have a mixture resembling Kraft parmesan cheese (a tip from my Sister Pie cookbook, and after lots of experimentation, I can confirm this is the way to achieve the best pie crust). Add half a cup of active sourdough starter and mix until combined. Use your hands to bring the mixture together into a dough. You'll want to refrigerate this dough for at least 2 hours and up to 2 days. If you're not planning on making the pie anytime soon, you can freeze the pie dough.

Pie filling is generally experimental at our house. I usually take a large bowl of fruit, add lemon juice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of tapioca starch, anywhere from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of granulated monk fruit (sometimes I add a teaspoon or less of molasses to the monk

fruit for a brown sugar substitute), and salt. I've used this with apples, apple-rhubarb, plums, cranberries, peaches, and cherries. Again, I recommend playing around with fruit combinations and ratios. Cranberry pie needs more monk fruit than peach pie, and apple and plum pie go great with cinnamon and other similar flavors. It's super easy to google your favorite fruit pie recipe and convert it into a healthier version.

Generally, I top my pies with some sort of crumble. I use about a cup of cold butter, and about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of chickpea flour, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of tapioca starch, a couple of spoonfuls of monk fruit depending on how tart your pie is, and a pinch of salt. Combine until you achieve the texture of sand.

Roll out your pie crust into a glass pan (don't put metal in the oven!) fill with your pie filling and top with your crumble. Bake for about an hour at 325 degrees Fahrenheit, until the topping is golden brown and your pie filling is bubbling.

Don't be afraid to experiment! I try new pies all the time. Some are better than others. I rarely measure ingredients when I'm cooking, which obviously makes it difficult to write out the perfect pie recipe!

Fruit

Whole fruit is the absolute best thing, health-wise, to satisfy a sugar craving. Personally, if watermelon season took place during Halloween, I think we'd have no need for candy! One of our favorite sweet snacks is a bowl full of berries with a spoonful of homemade nut butter on top. You can add Lily's chocolate chips or some unsweetened shredded coconut on top (although I'd skip the chocolate chips if you're trying to be as healthy as possible).

We also keep baking chocolate powder on hand to go with fruit.

You can dip bananas, strawberries, oranges, or any other fruit in it that you think would go well with chocolate! You can add a bit of chocolate powder to your homemade nut butter berry concoction as well, if you want to forgo the chocolate chips.

On farmer's market days we come home with generally, half a bushel of apples, a case of berries, and 2 boxes of grapes (that is until orange season starts, then we add a case of oranges). With 5 people, this much fruit usually doesn't even last all week!

Conclusion

The first time I hung out with my friends after I had converted to a more organic lifestyle got a few funny looks. A lot of people recognize that sugar is bad for you, but would rather just enjoy sugar while they accept the inevitable health problems to come. Warning: some of these food combos might seem a little weird! I wanted to make sure I covered all my bases so I tried to include everything that I myself might eat when I'm craving something sweet. For this Halloween, I'll be spending some time in the mountains with a couple of friends. I'll probably make a small batch of peanut butter cups to snack on while they eat Halloween candy, but probably not much else.

Please note that if your gut is unwell even some of the healthiest alternatives above may not be that healthy for you. Fruit that is blended or cooked down at all is not as good for you as fresh, raw fruit. But if you're cooking at home, anything you make will be radically better than something you would get at a restaurant or grocery store. Even now, if I eat too much sugar, I may need to take SF722 to combat the yeast. If I skip a salad and eat a bunch of fruit or sugar, I feel the effects even more! So remember to plan accordingly and take care of yourself before, during, and after a day of eating too much junk food.

Happy Halloween!