

LS PICK

Ice cream; guilt free!

From children smothering their faces with melted cream to the elderly quietly enjoying the brain freeze, ice cream truly is a universal dessert that we all love and often crave. Sadly for a lot of people, especially diabetics, such experiences are rare for ice cream contains vast amounts of sugar. However all hope is not lost! New ways of preparing the cool and delectable offerings are now available around the city. No longer must you stay away from ice-cream and can indulge, provided you are careful about it!

Manufactured sugar free ice creams usually contain sugar alcohols such as xylitol or sorbitol, which gives it the sweet taste without the sugar. Sugar alcohols don't contain alcohol and work as reduced-calorie sweeteners; even diabetics can consume them without having to worry about raising their blood sugar level. Something to keep in mind though is that all sugar free ice cream is not carbohydrate free, so best to keep it to a minimum for diabetic patients. Now the question is, where do you go for some of that sweet, sweet ice-cream without always worrying what it may do to your health?

For those lazy times when you simply want to indulge in some creamy goodness without getting your hands dirty, head out to Club Gelato for some melted crunch hazelnut or creamy cool butter-scotch flavours. There's also MovenPick to catch some fruity flavours like strawberry or raspberry to give your taste buds that lift you have been seeking. Ask about their sugar free options too while you are at it.

If those too are inconvenient for you, the most easily accessible has to be the Igloo light in vanilla and the Belissimo sugar free selections, both available in all major departmental stores. Ice cream lovers cannot go wrong with either brand and on hot summer days, nothing will beat a night of Netflix with some ice cream to keep you company.

As the flavours are not plentiful, you may also opt to make your own ice cream. For that little crunch of ice, blend in frozen fruits of choice with some yoghurt and syrup and freeze the mix. At the right time - that is whenever you want it after it is frozen - take it out and slurp away.

The best homemade ice creams come out when you experiment so let your whole family join in, mix and match flavours, from green tea flavoured to peanut butter and chocolate -sugar free peanut butters are always available at grocery stores- the options are endless! By making your own ice cream, you can customise flavour, sugar and calorie count to your liking. And perhaps soon, you will have your own ice cream company! In the sweltering summer about to come, that may just be the dream!

By Anisha Hassan



SPOTLIGHT

The sweet sugar free life

Soaring summer temperatures blind us into trances where we become attracted to indulge in seemingly harmless tall cones of luscious ice-cream. Wedding fevers back us into corners where we give in just one more decadent sweet. Biryani is simply incomplete without its perfect complement 'zarda.' What's the real harm in one more bite of the chocolate cake anyway?

Well, for starters that one scoop of decadent ice cream was expertly hiding 130 calories. A singular serving of those sugar-drenched sweets disguised 270 calories. And an irresistible rich chocolate bar masked 139 calories, which will basically need you to run roughly 5 miles to burn off. Even carbohydrates are basically sugar.

Essentially a harmless combination of three molecules, sugar is labeled as the 'new tobacco.' Deemed addictive, the liver even treats it the same way as alcohol. This is where sugar-free rescuers enter the equation; weaponising its proud flag of low calories in the battle against sugar.

Endocrinologist Dr Tanjina Hossain shines a light on the real and imminent detriments of a seemingly harmless molecule of sugar. She elaborates, "Sugar stimulates the appetite centre of the brain but somewhat fails in satisfying it. This explicable leads to human cravings for a second can of soda or a third bar of chocolate." This is precisely what makes sugar addictive and hence, the exact opposite of harmless.

Diabetes is a common consequence of consistent binging on sugar over the years. Here's a basic 7th grade endocrinology recap: glucose found in sugarcane, dairy and sweets is easily absorbed within the bloodstream of the human body upon ingestion. This contributes to the sugar levels rising fast and the release of insulin from the pancreas to moderate it.

Sadly, the pancreas can only take so much and too much sugar incapacitates it from its primary job. The eventual diagnosis is diabetes.

Apart from diabetes, extra calories consumed from desserts can bring about a host of problems for the human body. Abdominal obesity from extra fat deposited in the stomach, hypertension, heart diseases from clogged vessels, stroke and even cancer from insulin resistance have all been cited as prominent side-effects of sugar.

"These are precisely why we should make the switch to sugar-free desserts," urges Dr Tanjina.

To help you say sayonara to refined sugar, effective sugar substitutes have got your back; our two main directives being, natural substitutes and chemical structures of sugar substitutes.

Dr Tanjina Hossain advocates for the



inadequacy of ditching sugar for raw honey or brown sugar. "They are all sugar and they are all equally harmful," she further clues us in.

Swapping out the mandatory box of sweets for a palatable yoghurt dessert fulfilling the healthy quota sans sugar or replacing the bar of ice cream for protein-rich foods such as cashews or peanuts are a couple of healthier choices to begin with.

A Bengali vermicelli dessert with milk or the classic 'phirni' after a hearty lunch can be thoughtfully substituted for a healthy bowl of fruit salad. Fruits, though containing sugar, are high in minerals, vitamins and fibre, championing them against the faceoff with sugar. Another point in their bags is the

fact that they are a true relief for the gut in this scorching heat.

Artificial sweeteners do have one massive advantage working in their favour; zero calories. This means no running on the treadmill to burn them off. The sugary taste duly stimulates the taste-buds and satisfies the sweet tooth. "However, any and all kinds of artificial and chemical additives could have adverse effects on our health," warns Dr Tanjina. "Thus, it is best to steer clear of them," she further advises.

Sugar-free desserts bring about a basket of benefits entirely of their own. Cutting down on sugar is essentially saying no to calories. Bidding farewell to the nine spoonfuls of sugar in one can of fizzy drink moderates blood pressure, leads to weight loss and a higher life expectancy.

Improved cognitive functions result in better sleep, concentration and a more synergistic integration of hormones. Ditching sugar practically means more awareness and greater brain function. Of course, this means forsaking a cheesecake every evening and switching out brownies for brown bread. That is the deal you would have to take on for a healthier lifestyle.

"We eat calories, we do not necessarily burn them," Dr Tanjina stresses.

A 30-minute run on the treadmill or a refreshing morning jog can do wonders and miracles. You do not necessarily have to be a diabetic to lay off sugar. Health conscious parents concerned over their children consuming high counts of sugar or people interested in promoting a greater well-being through healthy choices; there is no particular label to go sugar-free.

Undoubtedly, sugar-free desserts ask a great commitment and if you are brave enough to forgo the notoriously delicious calorie-concealing desserts, you are very brave indeed.

By Ramisa Haque
Photo: Collected