



to work) and unfold at lunchtime – you'll be surprised how long it stays hot! On Mondays, you can take leftover Sunday roast (although you might want to skip cold gravy). Alternatively, make a large pot of ratatouille at the beginning of the week and eat it with a different carb each day (rice cakes/gluten-free bread/boiled potatoes etc).

Finally, if you work near a Chinese takeaway, then order a tub of steamed rice. Add a tin of flavoured tuna and mix for a delicious and quick hot meal. That should liven up lunchtime a little – and invite curious glances from envious co-workers. ALI WALSH

### Which is the best sugar substitute or sweetener to use in baking recipes?

When it comes to replacing sugar in recipes there are now lots of options and it can be confusing. If you're baking something like a cake, xylitol, granulated stevia and coconut sugar all work well in these recipes due to their sugar-like texture.



It's worth noting that coconut sugar, while containing beneficial nutritional properties, is still quite high in fructose (the part of sugar that in excess, is damaging to our bodies). Xylitol and stevia on the other hand are fructose-free, but you want to look for minimally processed brands, so do a little research and order online if you need to.

If the recipe is calling for golden syrup, honey or maple syrup, it's worth experimenting with brown rice syrup or barley malt extract as a substitute. Both of these are much lower in fructose, but still provide that sticky texture to bind things.

Don't forget you can also use natural sweetness from fruit in recipes – apple purée and bananas can work well. Dates, date syrup and date sugar are also a better option to refined sugar, but be mindful of how much you use – although natural, they are still high in fructose.

It's worth remembering that all sugar substitutes have pros and cons. There isn't one that is perfect to use and people have different preferences. I'd recommend trying a few in different recipes and seeing what you like.

Remember to focus on reducing the frequency you indulge in baked sweet foods to help you reduce overall consumption. LAURA THOMAS

## OUR EXPERTS



### Ali Walsh

Ali Walsh was diagnosed with coeliac disease nearly 20 years ago, at a time when free-from food was scarce. She started her own cake business

because there was a lack of fresh gluten-free cake on offer. Ali feels if you can't eat a particular food, you shouldn't feel deprived, and has created recipes so delectable that even people without dietary requirements clamour for her bakes. A regular on BBC Radio, Ali often advises on managing diets. [www.thelocalbakehouse.com](http://www.thelocalbakehouse.com)



### Vicki Montague

Vicki is an acclaimed and well-followed blogger, recipe writer and teacher who found her calling after she was diagnosed with

IBS. She was later to discover her daughter had coeliac disease. As well as creating recipes, Vicki offers unique cookery lessons too – from the comfort of your own home – via video linkup. She also has a number of videos on her YouTube channel, showing people how to make her simple and tasty dishes. [www.freefromfairym.com](http://www.freefromfairym.com)



### Laura Thomas

Laura is a health coach, writer and founder of Happy Sugar Habits. Studying at the Institute of Integrative Nutrition and having been

a former sugar addict herself, she encourages a holistic, practical approach to lower sugar living that helps people reduce cravings but still enjoy the occasional treat. She has written about sugar shame, all or nothing sugar mentality and binge eating – having contributed to The Telegraph, The Daily Mail and presenting The Sugar Diaries on UK Health Radio. [www.happysugarhabits.com](http://www.happysugarhabits.com)