*Stevia rebaubiana*

**Common Name** – Sweet Leaf (Stevia)

**Abstract**

**Stevia**  is a sweetener and [sugar substitute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugar_substitute) derived from the leaves of the plant species [*Stevia rebaudiana*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevia_rebaudiana), native to Brazil and Paraguay. The active compounds are [steviol glycosides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steviol_glycoside" \o "Steviol glycoside) (mainly [stevioside](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevioside" \o "Stevioside) and [rebaudioside](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebaudioside" \o "Rebaudioside)), which have 30 to 150 times the [sweetness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweetness) of sugar, are heat-stable, [pH](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PH)-stable, and not [fermentable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fermentation_(food)). The body does not metabolize the glycosides in stevia, so it contains zero calories like some [artificial sweeteners](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_sweeteners). Stevia's taste has a slower onset and longer duration than that of sugar, and some of its extracts may have a bitter or [licorice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licorice" \o "Licorice)-like [aftertaste](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aftertaste) at high concentrations.

The legal status of stevia as a [food additive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_additive) or [dietary supplement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietary_supplement) varies from country to country. In the United States, high-purity stevia glycoside extracts have been [generally recognized as safe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generally_recognized_as_safe) (GRAS) since 2008, and are allowed in food products, but stevia leaf and crude extracts do not have GRAS or [Food and Drug Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_and_Drug_Administration) (FDA) approval for use in food. The [European Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union) approved stevia additives in 2011, while in [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan) stevia has been widely used as a sweetener for decades.

**Commercial use**

In the early 1970s, sweeteners such as [cyclamate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclamate) and [saccharin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saccharin) were gradually decreased or removed from a variant formulation of [Coca-Cola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coca-Cola). Consequently, use of stevia as an alternative began in Japan, with the [aqueous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aqueous) [extract](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extract) of the leaves yielding purified steviosides developed as sweeteners. The first commercial stevia sweetener in Japan was produced by the Japanese firm [Morita Kagaku Kogyo Co., Ltd.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morita_Kagaku_Kogyo_Co.,_Ltd.) in 1971. The Japanese have been using stevia in food products and soft drinks, (including Coca-Cola), and for table use. In 2006, Japan consumed more stevia than any other country, with stevia accounting for 40% of the sweetener market.

As of 2006, China was the world's largest exporter of stevioside products. In the mid-1980s, stevia became popular in U.S. [natural foods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_foods) and [health food](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_food) industries, as a noncaloric natural sweetener for teas and weight-loss blends. The makers of the synthetic sweetener [NutraSweet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NutraSweet) (at the time Monsanto) asked the FDA to require testing of the herb. As of 2006, China was the world's largest exporter of stevioside products. In 2007, [the Coca-Cola Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Coca-Cola_Company) announced plans to obtain approval for its stevia-derived sweetener, [Rebiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebiana" \o "Rebiana), for use as a food additive within the United States by 2009, as well as plans to market Rebiana-sweetened products in 12 countries that allow stevia's use as a food additive. In May 2008, Coca-Cola and [Cargill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cargill) announced the availability of [Truvia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truvia" \o "Truvia), a consumer brand stevia sweetener containing [erythritol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erythritol) and Rebiana. which the FDA permitted as a food additive in December 2008. Coca-Cola announced intentions to release stevia-sweetened beverages in late December 2008. From 2013 onwards, [Coca-Cola Life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coca-Cola_Life), containing stevia as a sweetener, was launched in various countries around the world.

Shortly afterward, [PepsiCo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PepsiCo) and Pure Circle announced [PureVia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PureVia" \o "PureVia), their brand of stevia-based sweetener, but withheld release of beverages sweetened with [rebaudioside A](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebaudioside_A" \o "Rebaudioside A) until receipt of FDA confirmation. Since the FDA permitted Truvia and PureVia, both Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have introduced products that contain their new sweeteners.