

# FACT OR FACTORY

Most “all-natural” sweeteners are indeed, processed. Heat, chemical additives and ingredient manipulation are common practices to turn leaves, fruit and sap into powders or concentrated syrups. In contrast, **honey...is just, honey.**

Honey bees do all the heavy lifting when it comes to making this all-natural sweetener. These amazing insects extract nectar from flowers and naturally transform it into honey inside the beehive. Beekeepers take only the honey that the bees don't need for food, and extract it by removing the wax caps with a heated knife and spinning the honey to separate it from the comb. The honey is then filtered to remove parts of the bee hive or honey comb.

Honey is not manipulated or exposed to extreme heat. Some beekeepers and handlers might heat the honey to make bottling easier, but that doesn't alter the liquid's natural composition.



# Common processing requirements of “all-natural” sweeteners



## Stevia

*Leaf to augmented powder*

The development of Stevia includes **multiple steps** that **transform the leaves** of the stevia rebaudiana plant **into a powder**. Stevia production starts when leaves are harvested, **dried and steeped** in hot water. Next, the product is **filtered and centrifuged multiple times** to **concentrate** the sweet components of the leaf. Manufacturers will then separate these concentrates and purify them, typically using an ingredient such as **ethanol**. Because stevia is intensely sweet, many manufacturers combine them with other ingredients, such as **dextrose, inulin** or **erythritol**, to even out the flavor.

Source: [stevia.com](http://stevia.com)



## Agave Nectar

*Plant to evaporated syrup*

Agave nectar is derived from the juice of agave leaves, which mainly grow in Mexico and Latin America. The leaves are picked and **pressed**, which releases the leaves' juice. This juice is then **heated**, which **convert** its complex sugars into simple sugars and **concentrates the liquid into a syrup**. The syrup is **filtered** then further **thickened** through controlled **evaporation**.

Source: *Wholesome Sweeteners Inc.*



## Monk Fruit Extract

*Fruit to liquid to powder*

Creating a monk fruit extract takes **multiple steps**, starting with the the picking of ripe monk fruit. The fruit is **crushed and mixed** with hot water. Next, the liquid is **filtered**, leaving a clear juice consisting of fruit sugars and sweet antioxidants. These two compounds are **mechanically separated**. The sweet antioxidants go through a further processing step of **spray drying** to **turn the liquid product into a powder**.

Source: [monkfruit.org](http://monkfruit.org)



## Maple Syrup

*Sap to highly evaporated syrup*

The process of making maple syrup starts in early spring, when small holes are **drilled in maple trees**. For the next four to six weeks, the tree's sap flows out of the tree and **tubing** carries it to a **collection tank**. Each tree will yield about 10 gallons of sap. The sap is taken to **evaporators**, which **boils** off the water, **concentrating** the sweetness of the liquid. When sap first enters the **evaporator**, it contains about **98% water** and **2% sugars**. When it exits, it contains **33% water** and **67% sugar**. Next, they syrup is **filtered** and packaged.

Source: *Bascom Family Farms*



## Brown Rice Syrup

*Grain to concentrated syrup*

Brown rice syrup is derived from **cooked brown rice**. The cooked rice is **fed enzymes**, which break down the starches in the rice into simple carbohydrates. The resulting product is **strained** to remove the rice and then **boiled**. When boiled, **liquid evaporates** from the product, **concentrating** the sugars into a **low-water syrup**.

Source: [bakerpedia.com](http://bakerpedia.com)



## Cane Sugar

*Stalks refined into crystals*

Cane sugar comes from sugar cane stalks that are harvested and sent to factories to undergo a process to **convert** the ingredient from stalks to **sugar crystals**. During the first step, cane stalks are **crushed with large rollers**, which releases a cane juice. This juice is then **filtered through evaporation** to purify the juice. Next, the cane juice is **boiled**, which forms sugar crystals. These crystals **harden and form into large blocks**, which are **further refined** and shipped.

Source: *The Sugar Association*

To learn more about honey, an all-natural, unprocessed sweetener and flavor, visit [honey.com](http://honey.com).