

Recent news reports of sweetener reformulations raise questions about motivations

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The misleading "health" halo surrounding highly-publicized marketing campaigns regarding sweetener reformulations is starting to dim.

Recent announcements by Starbucks and other brands that they will remove high fructose [corn syrup](#) from certain products are being called into question in news articles by several experts and respected journalists. These articles have poked holes in companies' marketing efforts and put forth scientifically substantiated facts about sweeteners commonly used in foods.

As Washington Post health reporter Jennifer LaRue Huget wrote on June 12, "...most nutrition experts now agree there's really little material difference" between high fructose corn syrup and other caloric sweeteners. She added "They all deliver about 15-20 calories per teaspoon, and the human body appears not to know one from the other."

A June 25 Chicago Tribune article quoted food industry critic Walter Willett, M.D., of Harvard University's School of Public Health and author of Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy, who called recent product reformulations a "marketing distraction."

Another well-known food industry critic, Marion Nestle, commented that this type of product reformulation is a "calorie distractor." Nestle, who is the Paulette Goddard Professor of [Nutrition](#), Food Studies and

Public Health at New York University and author of *What to Eat and Food Politics*, continued her criticism stating, "The irony is that white table [sugar](#) — formerly a leading target of 'eat less' messages — suddenly has a health aura. Marketers have wasted no time moving in to use that aura to sell the same old products."

"Consumers are being misled into thinking that there are nutritional differences between high fructose corn syrup and sugar, when in fact they are nutritionally the same," said Audrae Erickson, president of the Corn Refiners Association. "Whether from cane, beets, or corn, a sugar is a sugar. They all contain four calories per gram. Switching out a kind of corn sugar for table sugar is not for health and it is not for science. It is for quarterly earnings. It is unfortunate that consumers are being duped by these marketing gimmicks - gimmicks which may result in higher food prices at checkout," Erickson said.

Links:

Huget JL. June 12, 2009. "Is That Right? "Real Sugar" is Everywhere. But is it Better for You?" Washingtonpost.com/The Checkup. Accessed June 28, 2009. [voices.washingtonpost.com/chec ... eal_sugar_is_ev.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/chec...eal_sugar_is_ev.html)

Mills S. June 25, 2009. "Natural sugar versus [high-fructose](#) corn syrup." The Chicago Tribune. Available online [www.chicagotribune.com/health/ ... un25,0,7627724.story](http://www.chicagotribune.com/health/...un25,0,7627724.story)

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