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Food & Nutrition Specialist



Artificial sweeteners provide virtually no calories and no nutrients (NDSU photo)

## Sweet Truths — What to know about artificial sweeteners...

*Some research suggests associations between frequent consumption of certain artificial sweeteners and conditions such as fatty liver disease, insulin resistance and gastrointestinal issues.*

“What’s the difference between these packets?” my husband asked me after he picked up his cup of coffee.

“These are different non-nutritive sweeteners,” I replied as I read the ingredient statement. “Some are sweeter than others.”

“Could you pick out a packet for me?” he added.

I selected a pink packet for him because it caught my eye. I think I used a blue packet.

I don’t know why we sweeten our coffee at restaurants. We probably just don’t like the flavor of the coffee, because we don’t add anything

to our coffee at home. I’m not too worried about the minor amount of these sweeteners we use. These substances are so sweet that most of the powder in the packet is actually bulk filler, such as maltodextrin.

Non-nutritive, or artificial, sweeteners include aspartame, acesulfame-K, neotame, saccharin and sucralose. Stevia, for example, is a type of herbal sweetener.

Artificial sweeteners provide virtually no calories and no nutrients. Aspartame is about 200 times sweeter than sugar, while sucralose is 600 times sweeter than sugar.

The common sweetener aspar-

tame comprises two amino acids: aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Foods and beverages containing aspartame must carry a warning for those who have phenylketonuria.

People with the disorder cannot break down phenylalanine, so they must follow a strict low-protein diet for life. The disorder can cause seizures and intellectual disability. Newborns are screened for this rare genetic condition.

Many years ago, I used to have one can of diet cola every day at work. My colleagues thought I drank pop all day, but I was actually just filling the empty can with water and sipping that. Since I no longer drink pop regularly, it tastes extremely sweet to me now.

Diet pop, like sweetened pop, is not good for our teeth. Phosphoric acid and citric acid in beverages can erode tooth enamel.

The Food and Drug Administration sets limits on the “Acceptable Daily Intake” of various artificial sweeteners. It’s usually set at one-hundredth the level considered toxic in animals.

People thought that if they simply cut out sugar calories from their diets, any excess pounds on their bodies would disappear. Unfortunately, despite the introduction of many artificial sweeteners, the overweight and obesity rates have increased.

Researchers continue to explore why this has occurred. People tend to overcompensate for the missed calories by eating other high-calorie foods, or they develop a “super-sweet tooth.”

On the other hand, some studies have shown that artificial sweeteners allow people with diabetes or obesity to occasionally enjoy

something sweet.

However, some research suggests associations between frequent consumption of certain artificial sweeteners and conditions such as fatty liver disease, insulin resistance and gastrointestinal issues.

Some recent studies link artificial sweeteners with disrupting our gut microbiome – the large group of microorganisms that live in our gut and help keep us healthy.

What about cancer risk? Cyclamates and saccharine increased bladder cancer risk in large doses in 1970s-era animal studies, but these findings have not been confirmed in humans at typical intake levels. FDA scientists “do not have safety concerns about aspartame when used under the approved conditions.”

Nutrition experts recommend avoiding non-nutritive sweeteners in toddlers’ diets and greatly limiting them in children. Pregnant women are advised to minimize or completely avoid them.

If anyone is sipping a diet pop as you read this, I do not mean to alarm you. If you are drinking many bottles or cans of diet soda a day, you are not doing your body a favor. What’s a person to do?

Think about your own beverage consumption. Quench your thirst with water.

Enjoy milk or a calcium-rich substitute with meals for the calcium and protein it provides.

If you like real sugar in your cof-

fee, enjoy it in moderation. A teaspoon of sugar has about 15 calories.

Be sure to keep sugar-free gum containing xylitol away from your pets, because it can be toxic to them.

Train your taste buds to enjoy less sweetness overall.

Consider a natural sweetener such as honey, but remember it is still an added sugar. Honey contains antioxidants and some trace minerals. Cinnamon, an antioxidant-rich spice, enhances the natural sweetness of food such as this dip.

### Honey Yogurt Fruit Dip

- 1 cup low-fat or nonfat plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons honey (to taste)
- Red and green apple slices

Mix ingredients for dip. Rinse and slice apples right before serving.

Makes four servings. With nonfat yogurt, each serving of dip has 70 calories, 0 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 13 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 45 milligrams sodium.

*(Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., is a North Dakota State University Extension food and nutrition specialist and professor in the Department of Health, Nutrition and Exercise Sciences.)*

### DATEBOOK cont. from page 2A

grees with 25 mile an hour winds. But even though it was over a month until Easter, spring was on the minds of North Dakotans. Across the state in Williston, the high was 30 with a warming trend. The weather report anticipated only a trace of snow with increasingly mild temperatures. Streets and roads in many places in the state were icy after a period of thawing and freezing, but no serious traffic problems were anticipated. Spring was in the air.

Shops were also in the mood for spring. The ads reflected the improving weather. Fargo’s Sears Roebuck and Company adver-

tised “smart spring dresses.” The ad boasted that “Every little lady can have gobs of fresh, cleverly styled washable frocks.” The dresses were 49 cents each for size 7 to 14 years. Other styles were 69 cents each. Mothers were urged to buy lots of the dresses for school and dress-up. Winter coats were on clearance for \$1.99.

A.L. Moody’s was also in a spring mood. Their ad noted that “March may be a lion or a lamb.” The store offered lady’s knit dresses which could be worn under a coat “when March winds roar” or worn on their own “when spring is in the air.” Pastels and two-color combinations were offered for \$7.95 each.

Herbst Department store focused on spring cleaning. Spring

was the time for new sheets at 84 cents each, ordinarily offered at \$1.39. It was noted that the taped edge was 25% stronger than ordinary sheets. Ruffled curtains were sure to brighten the home for spring. Half-length curtains had to be “seen to be appreciated.” Daintily ruffled and in a large selection of colors, the curtains, a \$1.00 value, were 15 cents each. The store also advertised their spring fashion show, coming up the following week and featuring suits, dresses and sweaters for spring, displayed by live models.

North Dakotans seem to take pride in an ability to withstand harsh winter. There is a tendency to laugh off below zero temperatures and gale-force winds. But spring is just around the corner, and that is not a bad thing.

the group of men, cheering each other, and perhaps even exclaiming out loud, “Hear ye, Hear ye!”

###

### The Fargo Theatre Turns 100

By Jayme L. Job

March 13, 2026 – The finishing touches were being put onto the brand-new Fargo Theatre on this date in 1926, before its much anticipated opening on March 15. Isaac Ruben, co-owner of Finkelstein and Ruben Theatres Company, arrived in town to direct last-minute installations.

No theatre of this scale or finery had ever been seen in the state. The Bijou, Fargo’s first theater to feature moving pictures, opened in 1906, but it didn’t rival the grand theaters of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Enter Moses Finkelstein and Isaac Ruben, two men who had been building theaters in the Upper Midwest since the turn of the century. By 1925, they were operating over a hundred theaters in four states, including the famous Capitol Theater in St. Paul and the State Theater in Minneapolis. The men decided to expand their business into North Dakota, and hired the local firm T. F. Powers and Company to construct the new theater. Built on the former site of Idlekope’s Fruit Store, the theater was constructed at a cost of \$350,000, a small fortune in 1926.

Ruben and Finkelstein broke ground for their new enterprise on September 15, 1925, and after six months of construction, the state-of-the-art theater was ready for its grand opening. With its landmark 36-foot-tall Fargo marquee, fine Italian leather seating for 1300, and 5,000 light bulbs, the theater was indeed monumental.

The theater’s first patrons entered for a 2 p.m. showing of Syd Chaplin’s film, “The Man on the Box,” which chronicled the comedic antics of a wealthy bachelor turned taxi driver. They were also treated to music performed on the theater’s \$25,000 organ, the Mighty Wurlitzer.

Despite the popularity of the theater, it eventually fell into disrepair. In the 1980s, local residents raised funds to restore the theater to its original glory, and in 2001, the first Fargo Film Festival was held in the restored venue.

Today, as the Theatre celebrates 100 years, patrons can attend a variety of shows in the art-deco building, and can still hear the music of the Mighty Wurlitzer.

“Dakota Datebook” is a radio series from Prairie Public in partnership with the State Historical Society of North Dakota and with funding from the North Dakota Humanities Council. See all the Dakota Datebooks at [prairiepublic.org](http://prairiepublic.org), subscribe to the “Dakota Datebook” podcast, or buy the Dakota Datebook book at [shop-prairiepublic.org](http://shop-prairiepublic.org).

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### Town Criers

By Sarah Walker

March 12, 2026 – It’s a “flock” of geese and a “murder” of crows, but what do you call a large group of town criers? On this date in 1929, the Park Hotel in Killdeer was full of them!

They had gathered in Killdeer for their regular Town Criers meeting. The Killdeer Herald reported that it “was a capacity affair. Thirty-five persons were recorded in attendance.”

The town criers enjoyed a meal, after which the chairman called the meeting to order. Part of the order of business was to discuss what they had accomplished. The newspaper reported, “As the last word, Haakon Weydahl, in his usual vivid way, portrayed their activities in military parlance, which took in every maneuver from the breakfast bugle of the morning after to the zero hour of the night before. As a climax, he decorated them with a specially prepared ribbon from each of which was suspended a five dollar gold piece.”

After the business of the meeting was over, the town criers went to the Odd Fellow Hall in the Killdeer Hotel building, where they played whist, sang, and enjoyed themselves. Their number increased as people around town, including “many who were weather-bound in town overnight”—at least that was their excuse.

The newspaper stated, “Somewhere, long ago, a sad-faced poet who never ‘convined’ with his friends and acquaintances uttered the following: ‘Backward, turn backward, O time in thy flight, and make me a child again just for tonight.’ That gem of thought confessing the accumulated stagnation of years gone by and expressing a yearning for things that were forever gone, would have never graced the crown of literature if the discouraged old poet had ever attended a party with the Killdeer town Criers.”

There are official town crier positions in some cities today, though none in North Dakota. Still, one can imagine the echo of

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## BID REQUEST

Open Date: March 2, 2026

The Belcourt School District is calling for sealed bids for:

The sale of:

- 2015 GMC Terrain SUV AS IS CONDITION
- 2001 Buick LeSabre Sedan AS IS CONDITION

The option to bid on one individual vehicle or both vehicles will be allowed. Each bidder must list the bid amount per vehicle separately. The bidder will be responsible for the timely removal of the vehicles after purchase is finalized with bus garage assistance if needed. The vehicles can be viewed by contacting Kevin Davis at the Belcourt School District Business Office between the hours of 9am to 2pm. He can be reached by calling 701-477-6471 ext. 3327 or cell 701-550-0330.

Sealed bids must be submitted to Duane Poitra at the school Business Office by the closing date of **March 12, 2026** at 4:00 pm. The mailing address is Belcourt School District #7, Attn: Duane Poitra, PO Box 440, Belcourt, ND 58316. The Belcourt School District #7 Board reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or any part of the bid or to waive any formalities in the bidding. For further information contact:

Duane Poitra  
Business Manager  
P.O. Box 440  
Belcourt, ND 58316  
(701) 477-6471 ext. 3213

## BID REQUEST

Open Date: March 2, 2026

The Belcourt School District is calling for sealed bids for the purchase of:

**(2) New 2026 or newer (23) Passenger plus Driver Activity Buses powered by a gas engine, 40-gallon fuel tank (minimum), 212” WB 14,500lb GVWR (minimum) chassis, 90,000btu (minimum) air conditioning condenser, overhead parcel racks, high-back reclining seats, with exterior color to be black. Buses are required to be available & delivered on-site by May of 2026.**

Alternate bid price option to include one (adequately sized) additional rear located heater per bus.

The bidder will be required to specify trade-in amount for (2) used 2016 Chevy StarCraft 20 passenger activity buses which can be viewed at the Belcourt School Bus Garage.

Successful bidders must be a licensed, bonded, franchised dealer with warranty and parts availability. Any offers by the bidders of warranties, options, or assumed costs must be listed in the bids. Estimated date of delivery of the bus must be stated. For exact bid specifications or to inquire on trade, contact Mr. Ray Trotter Jr at (701)/477-6471 ext. 3307.

All interested businesses or parties submitting bids must comply with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) Requirements. All parties must have or acquire a tribal business license before the final purchase is made. For further information on TERO at (701)/477-2600.

Sealed bids must be submitted to the school Business Office by March 12th, 2026 at 4:00 pm. The mailing address is Belcourt School District #7, Attn: Duane Poitra, PO Box 440, Belcourt, ND 58316. The bid will be opened in an open setting and will be presented to the School Board at its next regular meeting. The Belcourt School District #7 Board reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or any part of the bid or to waive any formalities in the bidding. For further information contact:

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Business Manager  
P.O. Box 440  
Belcourt, ND 58316  
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