

# SUGARCANE

A COMMODITY FACT SHEET COMPILED BY THE LOUISIANA AG IN THE CLASSROOM PROGRAM



## HISTORY

The sugarcane plant originated in southern Asia. Christopher Columbus introduced sugarcane to the New World on his second voyage in 1493. Iberville, the “Founder of Louisiana”, attempted growing sugarcane along the lower Mississippi but failed. Jean-Baptiste deBienville, the first administrator of France’s Louisiana Colony, was successful in growing cane in his garden in New Orleans. However, it wasn’t until the 1750s that Jesuit missionaries were able to successfully raise several sugarcane crops on their New Orleans plantation which is now the Central Business District.

Several plantations were planted in what is now the city limits of New Orleans. In 1795, Etienne deBore was the first to successfully granulate sugar on his plantation, located on what is now Audubon Park. The industry continued to grow slowly through the early 1800s. The introduction of new varieties in 1825 allowed for more rapid growth.

A big boost to the industry came along when Norbert Rillieux, a free man of color born in New Orleans and educated in Paris, invented the multiple-effect evaporation process. His invention has proven to be one of the greatest contributions to the world’s sugar industry. The industry continues to thrive today despite the many obstacles of disease, freezes, hurricanes, droughts and low prices. The states in which sugarcane is grown are Hawaii, Texas, Florida and Louisiana. Louisiana ranks second in sugarcane production in the United States, behind Florida.

In 1995, the Louisiana sugar industry celebrated the bicentennial of commercial sugar production.

## PRODUCTION

Sugarcane, *Saccharum Officinarium*, is a tropical grass that is planted vegetatively, using whole stalks of cane. In Louisiana, the stalks are planted in rows during the fall. They will begin to grow in the spring and mature into stalks over the late summer.

Sugarcane harvesting begins in late September and continues through early January. All cane in Louisiana is harvested mechanically then hauled to sugar mills. Once the cane arrives at the raw sugar factory, or mill, it is washed and crushed to release its sugary juice. The juice is then boiled down into a thick syrup. The syrup is separated into sugar crystals (raw sugar) and molasses.



### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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# SUGAR CRYSTALS



Make your very own “rock” candy with this simple recipe!

1. Heat one cup of water in a heat-resistant pot or beaker. Do not bring to a full boil.
2. Add one teaspoon of sugar at a time to the water as it heats. Stir the solution after adding each additional spoonful of sugar. When it seems the sugar will no longer dissolve,

- add one more teaspoon and remove the container from its heat source. Let cool.
3. Tie a metal washer to one end of a piece of string. Wrap the other end of the string around a stick or tongue depressor. Adjust the length of the string so that, when the stick rests on the mouth of the jar, the washer does not touch the jar bottom.

4. Once the sugar solution has cooled, pour into the jar. Place the jar where it will remain undisturbed. Check the jar daily; crystals should begin forming in a few days.
5. Enjoy your rock candy treat!

Variation: Add food coloring to the sugar solution to make colored rock candy crystals.

## INGREDIENTS (for a group of three people)

- Hot plate
- Water
- White sugar
- Pot or heat-resistant beaker
- Jar
- String
- Metal washer
- Popsicle stick or tongue depressor
- Teaspoon

In 2006, sugarcane was grown on 400,308 acres, adding \$319,656,067 to the state’s bottom line.

### **PRODUCTS**

The first products secured from sugarcane are sugar, syrups, and edible molasses.

### **BY-PRODUCTS**

By-products of sugarcane are the final, or blackstrap, molasses used primarily in livestock feed, and the stalk residue known as bagasse (BAG-ass). Bagasse is used for making a building material that resembles board, known as “Celotex.”

### **NUTRITION**

Sugar, or sucrose, is a carbohydrate that occurs naturally in every fruit and vegetable. It is a product of photosynthesis. Sugar is pure and 100 percent natural. It has only 16 calories per teaspoon and zero fat grams.

### **TOP SUGARCANE-PRODUCING PARISHES**

- Vermilion
- Iberia
- Lafayette
- Iberville
- St. Mary
- Assumption

### **CLASSIFICATION**

Kingdom	Plantae - Plants
Subkingdom	Tracheobionta - Vascular Plants
Superdivision	Spermatophyta - Seed Plants
Division	Magnoliophyta - Flowering Plants
Class	Liliopsida - Monocotyledons
Subclass	Commelinidae
Order	Cyperales
Family	Poaceae - Grass Family
Genus	Saccharum
Species	Saccharum officinarumL. - sugarcane