Sugar, also known as sucrose, is a naturally occurring product of photosynthesis made by all green plants. It is a highly versatile ingredient added to foods for much more than just sweetness.

1. Flavour
A small amount of sugar is added to many foods such as flavored yogurts and whole grain products to balance out sour and bitter flavors.

2. Preservation
When making jams, jellies, preserves, sauces, and dressings, sugar absorbs extra moisture and stops bacteria from growing, delaying spoilage.

3. Texture
The gel-like consistency found in jams and jellies is created when sugar is mixed with fruit fiber (pectin) and acids such as lemon juice.

4. Volume
Sugar acts as the food for yeast, which helps bread products and other leavened goods rise, giving them an airy texture.

5. Colour
When heated, sugar caramelizes or undergoes a Maillard reaction (browning) if proteins are present. Both of these processes result in the characteristic golden brown color and pleasing aromas of bread products, baked goods, and seared meats.

The texture of hard and soft candies depends on the size of the sugar crystals that form when different amounts of sugar are dissolved in a heated liquid mixture. Sugar also contributes to the creamy texture of dressings, thickens jams, makes sauces syrupy, and adds a crunchy texture to pickled vegetables.

Sugar acts as the food for yeast, which helps bread products and other leavened goods rise, giving them an airy texture.

Now You Know!
Sugar is a highly versatile ingredient - no other sweetener can match all of its roles. When you try to replace sugar in foods, often many additives are needed. This can make for a longer and more confusing ingredient list. Depending on the replacement ingredients, total calories may not always be lower than the original product.

For more information, visit sugar.ca