Cheap sugar joins bustles, penny candy

By RICHARD J. SCHNEIDER

Ah, nostalgia.
Remember when five-pound bags of sugar were going for only $1.90? That was last Tuesday.
Or how about a few weeks earlier when it was a steal at $1.79?
Those were the good old days.
Then came Black Wednesday, when supermarkets freaked out housewives by jacking sugar up to $2.50 for five pounds.
But don't despair, nostalgia buffs.
You'll be dreaming about $2.50 in two days, when the price is set to jump again.

On Wednesday, a five-pound bag will cost $2.90.
All of which may explain why:
—Jim Dunfee, manager at Azar's Big Boy restaurant at 13th Avenue and Broadway, is buying more $2 sugar dispensers than he used to.
—Waitresses and cashiers everywhere keep a closer eye on sugar supplies on tables and counters.
—Restaurant patrons have to ask for sugar.
—Dentists and some nutritionists quietly rejoice as the law of supply and demand forces down the over-consumption of sugar by Americans.

Dunfee was among several restaurant chain managers in the Denver area who've noticed a marked increase in the wholesale snitching of sugar.
"I've noticed a definite increase," he said.
"Business is the same, but sugar use is way up."

But at Azar's, where individual sugar packets aren't available, some customers "take the container and all."

And they cost the restaurant $36 per dozen.

In the Denny's restaurant chain, however, the sugar containers are $33 per dozen. They're disappearing faster than they used to, according to one manager.

One Denny's outlet has registered a 30 percent increase in the use of sugar.

White Spot restaurants are sticking it out with individual packets, easily stuffed into a purse or pocket.

Disappearance of sugar in the White Spot chain has zoomed with the prices at the super-market. White Spot managers are buying extra.

Moreover, they were forced recently to shift back to small pitchers for serving cream. Individual creamers were vanishing as fast as sugar packets, a manager said.

In another chain, managers report a jump in the pilferage of salt and pepper shakers — as time-honored a target for petty thieves as the hotel towel.

Sugar dispenser and associates
Endangered species?

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Yet a spokesman for another family restaurant chain, the Denver Drumstick, said sugar pilferage hasn’t been a noticeable problem.

So how do you keep customers from pocketing the white gold?

Dunfee says the employees are just watching customers a little closer, checking for telltale bulges.

In some places, like the downtown Denver Holiday Inn, patrons have to ask for sugar when they order their coffee or tea.

Of course, there’s more than just the economic-petty theft angle to recent sugar developments.

In fact, some experts say it’s not healthy at all to load up that morning cup of coffee with sweet stuff, bake those special (and rich) desserts or cram the kiddies with sugar-laden Kool-Aid.

Americans, on the average, eat 115 pounds of sugar each year. That’s a teaspoon per hour. It’s also more than 10 times greater than the world average of 11 pounds per person annually.

The Colorado Dental Association says American consumption of sugar is far too great. What now burns holes in your pocket has also been responsible for the holes in your teeth.

Tiny colonies of bacteria, called plaque, cling to our teeth and convert sugar into decay-causing acid.

While the overall health effects of sugar are in dispute, some nutritionists say the chemical is causing many American health problems, including some forms of heart disease.

What’s not in dispute, though, is that sugar consists of so-called “empty calories.” Your body can produce the sugar it needs from substances other than refined sugar.