

HOLIDAY FEASTING: ENJOY THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITHOUT PACKING ON EXTRA POUNDS

Overview

Food is the focal point of many holiday traditions. At times, it may seem that the temptation of special holiday foods is impossible to resist. Although it is important to indulge from time to time, keeping the ideas of variety, moderation and balance is especially important during the holiday season. The holidays have become synonymous with expanding waistlines, but it is possible to still enjoy seasonal festivities without loosening your belt.

Tips

1. **Remember, being healthy is about adopting lifelong eating habits that include balance, variety and moderation.** It isn't about being "good" or "bad" when choosing foods or about being "on" or "off" of a diet. Choices that are less healthy can be a part of a balanced and healthy lifestyle, but these items should definitely not comprise the majority of your diet. With this in mind, the holidays are not a realistic time to lose weight. Simply try to maintain your present weight (1).
2. **Don't skip meals!** It may seem logical to skip meals in order to "make up" for the increased calories found in most holiday meals, but you are much more likely to consume fewer calories if you aren't ravenous. Try snacking on high-protein foods (i.e. cottage cheese or milk) and/or high-fiber, low-calorie foods like fresh fruits and vegetables before going to a holiday event (1, 2, 3).
3. **Think about the holidays as a social event.** Yes, the holidays include lots of special foods not seen at other times during the year, but food is not the only thing that makes a holiday special. Try to focus on spending time with friends and family and not what the next meal will be. Choose a few food items (use a small plate so you aren't tempted to get more than you really need) and move away from the food area. Linger around the food counter will only tempt you to go back for seconds or thirds!
4. **Slow down!** Take the time to enjoy what you are eating. Eating more slowly will help you to eat less and avoid feeling stuffed (1, 2, 3).
5. **Offer to make a healthy dish.** If you are hosting a party or event or just attending one, try entertaining with healthier dishes (2). Chances are, your family and friends will enjoy the items just as much as their calorie-filled counterparts. Try substituting healthier ingredients in a family favorite or start a tradition with a new recipe.
6. **Watch those beverages!** Alcoholic and some non-alcoholic beverages can sneak extra empty calories into any holiday event. Go easy on the beer, wine, cocktails, eggnog and specialty coffees. For calorie-free options, try flavored teas, sparkling water, water with lemon or lime or plain coffee. To sneak in a serving of milk, try plain lattes (or lattes made with sugar-free syrup). Cider or 100% juice are also better options, but remember that juices are higher in calories than the original fruits they come from (1, 2, 3).
7. **Choose your calories wisely!** Appetizers are especially tempting, but pack quite the caloric punch! Choose lower calorie options like vegetables with low-fat dip and take just a few of the higher-calorie favorites. Use this same technique when filling your holiday plate and go for the vegetables, lean meats and other lower-calorie sides, while choosing only a few small portions of higher-calorie options (3).

8. **Go easy on the dips and sauces.** Gravies, cream sauces, dressings and dips can add hundreds of calories to a meal. Try to use lower-calorie versions if available. Use these items sparingly!
9. **Share your dessert!** Enjoy your favorite desserts in small quantities. Choose fresh fruits and other low-calorie options if available.
10. **Keep up that exercise!** It is easy to get out of your normal routine during the holidays, but continuing your regular exercise routine can help you to keep off unwanted weight and help to keep your energy level up (1, 2).

Make Your Favorites Healthier

Recipe Suggestions (4, 5)		
Instead of the Traditional...	Try...	Other Suggestions
<i>Gravy</i>	Refrigerating meat drippings to harden the fat. Skim the hardened fat off of the top before using it to make gravy.	Make an au jus or wine reduction.
<i>Turkey thighs, legs or wings</i>	To choose roasted turkey breast without the skin.	Also try chicken breast or lean ham.
<i>Green Bean Casserole</i>	Using low-fat cream soup and top with almonds.	Use other vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts, squash or carrots.
<i>Mashed Potatoes</i>	Making mashed potatoes with skim milk, or chicken broth instead of whole milk, cream and/or butter. You can also add garlic, garlic powder, or parmesan cheese for extra flavor.	Try plain baked potatoes or sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes can also be mashed for a twist on the original favorite. Try adding cinnamon or orange zest to sweet potatoes for extra flavor.
<i>Egg Nog</i>	Placing 4 bananas, 1 ½ cups skim milk, 1 ½ cups plain nonfat yogurt, ¼ teaspoon rum extract and ground nutmeg in a blender. Blend until smooth and top with nutmeg.	Try warm 100% apple juice or apple cider. Add a cinnamon stick or spice blend for extra flavor.
<i>Dips, Dressings & Sauces</i>	Using equal parts fat-free sour cream and reduced-fat mayonnaise instead of whole-fat mayonnaise. Plain, non-fat yogurt can also be used instead of mayonnaise. Choose fat-free or 1/3 less fat cream cheese instead of the whole-fat version. Use fat free half and half instead of heavy cream.	Many reduced-calorie products are now available at your local grocer. These products can save time if you are in a time crunch!
<i>Desserts</i>	Substituting 2 egg whites for each whole egg. Use evaporated skim milk instead of heavy cream. Choose fat-free or 1/3 less fat cream cheese instead of the whole-fat version. Add applesauce or other fruit purees in equal parts for the oil in a recipe. Substitute 1 Tbsp diet margarine and 2 Tbsp cocoa powder for every 1 oz. unsweetened baking chocolate.	Use fresh fruits, fruit kabobs or fruit salads for a light dessert. Try topping cakes with fresh fruit or fruit sauces (made without sugar) instead of glazes or frostings. Top desserts with fat-free vanilla yogurt instead of whipped cream.

Healthy Holiday Recipes

Mushroom Bruschetta (Appetizer)

(Yield: 8 Servings)

Ingredients:

1 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp coarsely ground pepper
2 tsp hot curry powder
1 ½ lbs button mushrooms, coarsely chopped
1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, peeled
2 tsp dried leaf oregano, crushed
2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
1/3 cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
1 loaf or 16, ½ inch thick slices of Italian or French bread

Heat oil, pepper and curry powder in a deep skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, onion, 2 cloves minced garlic and oregano; mix well. Cover and cook 2-3 minutes. Remove lid, lower heat and continue to cook (stirring often) until mushroom mixture is somewhat dry in texture. Remove from heat and mix in vinegar and chopped parsley. Adjust seasonings. Allow to cool slightly. Toast bread until golden. While toast is still warm, rub cut garlic on one side of each slice. Top toast with mushroom mixture and serve immediately.

Nutritional Information per Serving:

Calories: 105	Carbohydrates: 16g
Total Fat: 2.6g	Cholesterol: 0mg
Saturated Fat: 0.4g	Dietary Fiber: 2g
% of Calories from Fat: 21%	Sodium: 120mg
Protein: 5g	

Recipe courtesy of Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH). This recipe meets PBH and Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) nutrition standards that maintain fruits and vegetables as healthy foods.

Poached Pears (Dessert)

(Yield: 4 Servings)

Ingredients:

1 cup 100% orange juice
¼ cup 100% apple juice
1 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground nutmeg
4 whole pears
½ cup fresh raspberries
2 Tbsp orange zest

In a small bowl, combine the juices, cinnamon and nutmeg. Stir to mix evenly. Peel the pears and leave the stems. Remove the core from the bottom of the pear. Place in a shallow pan. Add the juice mixture to

the pan and set over medium heat. Simmer for about 30 minutes, turning pears frequently. Don't boil. Transfer the pears to individual serving plates. Garnish with raspberries and orange zest and serve immediately.

Nutritional Information per Serving:

Calories: 145	Carbohydrates: 36g
Total Fat: 0g	Cholesterol: 0mg
Saturated Fat: 0g	Dietary Fiber: 5g
% of Calories from Fat: 0%	Sodium: 0mg
Protein: 1g	

Recipe courtesy of the Mayo Clinic. This and other recipes can be found at: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/holiday-recipes/NU00645>.

Additional Reading & Resources

- http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=1446&gclid=CJCFzJHFhJkCFRj4xgodoXCxng
- <http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/25-healthy-holiday-choices>
- http://www.dining.ucla.edu/housing_site/dining/SNAC_pdf/GiftOfGoodHealth.pdf
- <http://family.samhsa.gov/be/holidayeat.aspx>

References

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2. UC Davis Health System. A few tricks to keep extra holiday pounds away. Accessed April 28, 2009. Available at: http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/welcome/features/20081112_holiday_eating/index.html.
3. Alberta Health Services. Tips for healthy choices for the holidays. Accessed April 28, 2009. Available at: http://www.capitalhealth.ca/NewsAndEvents/Features/2006/healthy_choices_for_the_holidays.htm.
4. California Pacific Medical Center. Tips for Healthy Holiday Eating. Accessed April 28, 2009. Available at: <http://www.cpmc.org/about/e-health/11-05%20healthy-holidays.html>.
5. UCLA Dining. Healthy Eating for the Holidays. Accessed April 28, 2009. Available at: http://www.dining.ucla.edu/housing_site/dining/SNAC_pdf/GiftOfGoodHealth.pdf.