

A Tour of the Family Reunion Buffet Table Tips for People with Diabetes

Summer barbecues, picnics, and family reunions can stir up thoughts of good, down-home cooking. However, if you have diabetes, these events can pose special challenges. How can you stay healthy and still enjoy those traditional meals? You can do it—by planning ahead, choosing wisely, and watching how much you eat. So, grab your plate and head for the buffet table.

Choose traditional soul food dishes that are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, and low in fat and calories. Great choices are beans, peas, lentils, and dark green vegetables such as broccoli, collard greens, cabbage, spinach, and turnip greens. Go for the green bean, three-bean, black bean, and black-eyed pea dishes or pasta salads mixed with summer vegetables. Sweet potatoes are also high in fiber and very nutritious. Whole wheat bread and cornbread are excellent sources of fiber and are good for everyone.

Watch out for dishes loaded with butter, cheese, and mayonnaise. Choose fresh or steamed vegetables that are light on salad dressing, cheese, or cream. If you can, make your own dressing for salads with a little olive oil and vinegar.

Vegetables and grains should fill up most of your plate, but leave room for some lean meat, poultry, or fish. Be sure to choose grilled chicken—and remove the skin—instead of the fried variety. For something different, try grilled fish and turkey burgers made with onions and chopped green peppers. Top your burger and sandwiches off with mustard rather than mayonnaise.

What's for dessert? Summer means terrific fruits. It's hard to beat a fresh fruit salad, cantaloupe, or watermelon. Fruit is an excellent source of fiber, vitamins and minerals, and has zero fat. Everyone, including people with diabetes, should eat three to four servings of fruit a day. Cobblers, pies, and cakes are high in fat and calories. If you work it into your meal plan, have a small serving.

It's best to drink water, unsweetened tea, or diet soda. Add a wedge of lemon for flavor. If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, limit it to no more than one drink a day for women, two for men, and drink only with a meal.

Eating the right foods to control your blood glucose means being prepared and planning ahead. If you need help putting together a meal plan, ask your primary care provider to refer you to a dietitian or diabetes educator. For more information about controlling your diabetes, call the National Diabetes Education Program at 1-800-438-5383 or visit the program's website at <http://www.ndep.nih.gov> for information on planning a diabetes-healthy family reunion.

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