

December: Healthy Holiday Party Tips

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As the holidays approach, keeping a commitment to healthful eating can be challenging. Research shows that the average American gains about one pound during the winter holiday season. According to a National Institutes of Health report, most people don't lose that extra pound of weight, so it accumulates over time. Follow these helpful tips for eating sensibly at holiday parties without increasing your waistline or sacrificing taste.



Healthy Holiday Party Tips:

Plan ahead. Food is everywhere during the holidays and it's important to plan ahead so you can enjoy your favorite foods without sacrificing nutrition goals. Maintain a regular eating schedule, starting with breakfast. Don't skip meals, because this may cause you to overeat the rest of the day to make up for missed calories. Try eating a healthy snack before the party or gathering so you won't overeat. Examples of healthy snacks include low-fat yogurt, fruits and veggies, or whole grain cereal.



Use portion control. The keys to controlling calorie intake are moderation and portion control. Balance party meals with other meals during the day. Eat small, healthy meals with fewer calories so party food won't cause you to exceed your calorie needs. Take smaller portions, eat smaller bites, chew slowly, and savor each delicious bite. Use a smaller plate so it looks full and you won't feel like you deprived yourself.



Slow down to slim down. It takes about 20 minutes after food enters our mouths before the brain starts to perceive we're getting full. Slow down at the dinner table this holiday season to slim down. Take time to sit and savor the holiday food flavors. Listen to your body and stop eating when you're full.



Smart dessert decisions. If you're looking for ways to save calories, try skipping dessert or opting for fresh fruit when it's available. If you want dessert, eat less during the meal and select a half portion or sampling of bite size pieces of several desserts. Alternatively, try picking out one or two favorites and eat reasonable portions of them or choose special desserts not available other times of the year.



Stay active to decrease stress. Do the holidays stress you out? Instead of relieving stress with holiday goodies, try being more physically active. Physical activity helps boost energy levels so you can be more productive during the holidays. It also helps the body relax, releases emotional tension, promotes better quality sleep, and creates feelings of psychological well-being.



Focus on friends and family. Don't make food the priority at parties and gatherings. Focus on the conversation and being with friends and family and you will probably enjoy the food more, get full faster and won't overeat. Concentrate on making memories and socializing with other party guests away from the buffet table.



This holiday season focus on socializing, making new acquaintances, and having fun. Spend time with relatives or catching up with old friends. Think



about what you are celebrating, not just about the food. Schedule time for physical activity this holiday season and aim for 30 minutes on most days. For more food, nutrition, and health information go to food.unl.edu.

Recipe Modification Ideas!

If you are hosting a gathering this holiday season you can reduce fat and calories without sacrificing taste by swapping out a few ingredients in your favorite recipes.

- Using two egg whites in place of one egg can reduce the cholesterol.
- Use low-sodium, fat-free chicken broth in your mashed potatoes to add flavor and cut back on added butter or margarine.
- Substitute applesauce for oil, margarine or butter in muffins and quick breads like banana bread. Try substituting a small amount at first, as the more you substitute the more the texture of the finished product changes.
- For dips, sauces and pie toppings, use fat-free yogurt, sour cream and whipped topping.
- Sliced almonds make a delicious, crunchy topping in place of fried onion rings.
- Choose reduced-fat or low-fat cheeses for salads and casseroles.

Additional Resources & Links:

Helpful Winter Holiday Food Preparation, Food Safety & Healthy Eating Links. Need an ingredient substitution, an answer to a baking or other food preparation question? Healthy food ideas for the holidays? Help can be just a click away.

<http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/helpful-holiday-links>

Food Safety for Families. Holiday food safety newsletter. <http://go.unl.edu/7fo>

Holiday Food Safety Success Kit. Find tips on food safety, shopping organizers and checklists, and menus and recipe ideas for the holidays.

<http://www.holidayfoodsafety.org/>

Tiny Tastes Can Total BIG Calories over the Winter Holidays. Extra calories can sneak in over the holidays. They don't always come in large portions, but can tiptoe in through tiny tastes.

<http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/tiny-tastes-pp>

UNL Extension Calendar – National Food Days, Weeks, and Months for December.

<http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/december>

All the Healthy Bites! Healthy Bites is a newsletter that focuses on a different food, nutrition and /or health theme for each month.

http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/healthybites_archives

Sources:

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Updated: November 2013