



Eat, drink and be healthy



8 ways to enjoy the holidays with food, friends and family

The holiday season is filled with many festivities and decadent food choices. Too much of that great food can wreak havoc on our health.

However, there are still ways to enjoy get-togethers and not totally lose track of your healthy living goals. The holidays are a time for socializing with friends and family. It is important to focus on the occasion, not on the overabundance of rich foods. All foods can fit – even traditional holiday goodies – into a healthful eating plan, with balance and moderation. Keep in mind these holiday menu tips:

1



Keep your eye on portion sizes: It's not always what you eat, but rather how much that can lead to overindulgence – not just during the holidays, but any time of the year. Use *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* to determine how much is right for you. If you are at a sit-down dinner party, cut your first helping in half. That way, if you are still hungry, you can enjoy seconds and the total amount of food you eat will be about the same as a healthy portion.

2



Go green: Fill half your plate with colourful vegetables, especially orange and green vegetables – they will fill you up with few calories and provide different tastes, colours, nutrients and textures. Another way to go green is to use fresh zucchini or cucumber sticks, broccoli florets, carrot sticks, and red and green peppers with a low-fat dip or spread such as hummus, yogurt with herbs, or fresh salsa.

3



Drinks on the house: Lower-fat egg-nogs, “virgin” Caesars, sparkling water, and cranberry juice spritzers are all great choices in keeping with the season. If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, plan to have water or soda water with a slice of lemon or lime between each drink to pace your intake.

4



Go easy on the extras: Try using herbs, spices, lemon juice, garlic, low-sodium broths and vinaigrettes to add flavour to potatoes, vegetables and meat dishes, instead of dressing up your foods with gravy, sour cream, butter, margarine or cream-based sauces.

Take the edge off your hunger before a party. Keep the rest of the day's food selections healthier. Select foods like high-fibre cereals, non-fat milk or yogurt, vegetable soups, cut up vegetables such as red, yellow, and green peppers, baby carrots, and small pieces of fruit such as apples, bananas or mandarins. These foods will provide a feeling of fullness and reduce the temptation to over-eat at the party.

5



Cook it healthy: Bake, grill, stir fry, steam or char-grill rather than fry. When hosting a party, set a good example and provide lots of vegetables, fruit and lower-fat dips. Send leftovers home with guests.

6

Create a colourful dessert platter: When serving dessert, arrange smaller portions of calorie-laden treats with colourful exotic fruits, such as pineapple, kiwi, mango, pomegranate, strawberries or grapes. Not only is the fruit a healthier option, it has a lot of eye-appeal.

7

Let the holiday spirit move you:

Plan to participate in regular physical activities with the whole family, such as walking, skiing, ice skating or tobogganing. Every bit of physical activity you can sneak in counts and it may help you de-stress from the holiday bustle.



8



Be realistic: Holiday eating will come with its temptations and indulgences. Follow the 80/20 rule: 80 per cent of the time try your best to choose healthy foods; 20 per cent of the time, splurge!

Have Fun! Enjoy traditional holiday meals and party foods with family and friends while maintaining a healthy lifestyle, too!

Jodis McCaine is a registered dietitian with the Winnipeg Health Region.

Healthy festive foods



Cranberries: Cranberries are full of **vitamin C** and **fibre**. They also contain the **antioxidant proanthocyanidins**, which can prevent the adhesion of bacteria to the urinary tract sometimes causing urinary tract infections.

Green Beans: Green beans are an excellent source of **vitamin C** and are no doubt one of the healthiest holiday foods around. They are a good source of **dietary fibre, potassium, folate, vitamin A** and **iron**. The traditional green bean casserole is rather high in calories from the butter, cream of mushroom soup and cheese it's made with. A healthier way of making this dish would be to use lower-fat cream of mushroom soup and less butter and cheese.

Turkey: It's not a holiday meal without the turkey! Turkey is an excellent source of **protein**. Compared to other meats, turkey has the least amount of fat per serving – if you pass on the skin. Roasted turkey with the skin has 10 grams of fat per 3-ounce serving, while removing the skin saves you half the fat (and calories).

Sweet Potato: Sweet potatoes are nutritional all-stars that have a natural sweetness that intensifies during cooking. They are rich in **beta-carotene, vitamin C** and are an excellent source of **potassium**. If you eat the skin (unlike the turkey skin) you will increase the fibre.