

Holiday Traditions Your Family Will Love

Every family has traditional holiday foods that show up on the table year after year. Instead of using the holidays as an excuse for high-fat, high-calorie feasting, use these five easy tips to remake your holiday favorites with good health in mind.

Holiday Tip #1: Control Portions

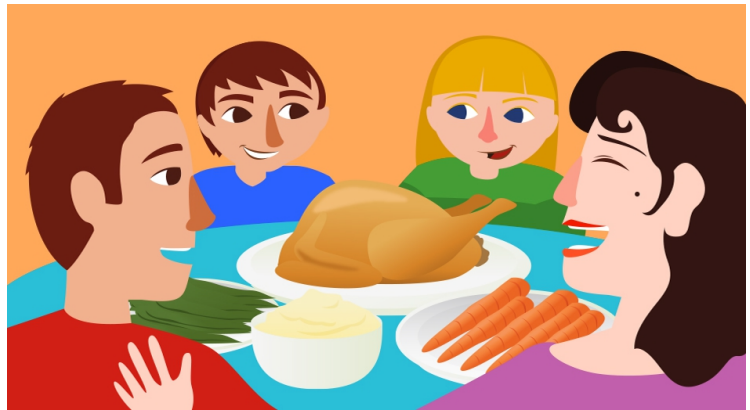
Set the holiday table with your family's heirloom china. This will help you automatically downsize portion sizes, because until the late 1960's, dinner plates were 9 inches or so in diameter. Today's plates have an average diameter of 12 inches. No one will notice a decrease in portion sizes when you use smaller plates and glasses. Cut Grandma's luscious Christmas cake into 18 servings, portion your favorite holiday cookie recipe to make 4 dozen smaller cookies instead of 3 dozen larger ones, cut fudge into 1"x1" pieces, and use 4-ounce glasses for your favorite sparkling punch.

Holiday Tip #2: Double Up on Vegetables

Serve vitamin-packed, lower carbohydrate vegetables like asparagus, Brussels sprouts, or broccoli in large bowls. Put higher calorie mashed potatoes and winter squashes in smaller bowls. Place a smaller serving spoon in the bowls with potatoes or winter squash and your family and guests will automatically – and unknowingly – serve themselves smaller portions (1). Instead of meatballs and cheese logs, feature vegetable appetizers like marinated mushrooms, tomato bruschetta, roasted asparagus, stuffed tomatoes, etc.

Holiday Tip #3: Give Healthful Gifts

Give homemade gifts that are packed with healthful ingredients. Bake breads that fea-



ture hearty whole grains, bring a basket of luscious fresh fruit instead of a box of candy as a hostess gift, or tie a bow around a bag of mixed nuts instead of cookies.

Holiday Tip #4: Lighten Up

Lighten up favorite recipes. Use fat-free evaporated skim milk instead of cream in custard pies and sauces, boost flavor in casseroles with spices and seasonings instead of butter or salt, and bake foods instead of frying them. No one will notice the changes!

Holiday Tip #5: Make Fruit the Star

Give colorful fruit a starring role. Serve fresh sliced berries for a holiday breakfast, include colorful chunks of fresh fruit such as pineapple, mango, kiwi, and red grapes on bamboo skewers for a holiday buffet; offer nibbles of dates and grapes instead of cheese and crackers, etc.

By Lynn Grieger, RD, CDE, CPT

Source:

1. Ice cream illusions bowls, spoons, and self-served portion sizes. Wansink B, van Ittersum K, Painter JE. *AM J Prev Med.* 2006 Sep;31(3):240-3.

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