



## Prepare for holidays with realistic expectations



We are approaching a grand time of the year when many reflect back on summer fun and look ahead to the upcoming months of enjoying the seasonal harvest and the celebration of family and friends. Important in this reflection, is the opportunity to value tradition and to cherish special moments. You may be asking yourself, how will I be able to create a Currier and Ives holiday season when I feel so overwhelmed and everyone expects so much? How can I prioritize

my personal health goals and those of my family without sacrificing traditional food favorites that my family has come to love and expect?

You can begin now by preparing for the season by establishing some realistic expectations that favor simplicity and emphasize health and fitness. The first step is to figure out what is most important and concentrate most of your energy there. Doing less does not have to compromise on health, tradition, or fun. Isn't simplicity a form of elegance?

This season provides so much stimulation for great food. Food of the season begins with colorful and nutritious fall fruits and vegetables, lean fowl, and concludes with lighter versions of traditional desserts. Healthy eating begins with the selection of recipes that can be modified to be lower in fat, sugar, and salt. The next step takes place at the grocery when you use a shopping list to guide purchasing. Shop for whole grains, and cold weather crops such as apples, winter squash, onions, potatoes, cabbage and carrots. When preparing food, take care to insure its safety by keeping foods at the recommended temperatures and by using sanitary food handling techniques.

At the table remember that many people prefer and appreciate food served in modest portions and enjoyed slowly in the company of family and friends. Family style service is respectful of an individual's choice to select what and how much is eaten. Serve water to your guests, and offer alternatives to alcoholic beverages. If you do drink alcohol, set a drink limit and consider diluting with club soda.

Fitness, too, can become part of the tradition. Mild exercise aids digestion, and walking can stimulate some great intergenerational discussions.

A sporting activity will get people moving and interacting.

Here are some general guidelines to help you lighten up on holiday eating:

- Eat less a few days before the holiday and a few days after.
- Use fat sparingly and where it will affect taste the most.

- Purchase fresh chicken or turkey that has not been injected with salt or fat.
- Consider serving poultry and fresh pork over ham.
- Prepare homemade stuffing by adding plenty of fruit and or vegetables to add flavor, fiber and moisture, particularly if you cook the stuffing outside of the bird. This will enable you to eliminate butter or margarine from the recipe. Add broth without fat if necessary.
- Bake the stuffing outside of the bird so fat is not absorbed.
- Gravy can be made from drippings (without the fat) from the bird. Remove the fat by placing the drippings in the freezer till the fat hardens and can be removed. Some individuals prefer to cook the neck and giblets on top of the stove for added flavor for broth that can used to moisten the dressing.
- Mash potatoes with the skin and use evaporated skim milk rather than with butter or margarine.
- Simplify sweet potato recipes by adding apples or other fruit to replace marshmallow crème. Enjoy the skin of the sweet potato and increase your fiber, as well.
- Consider crustless or single crust versions of your favorite pie. Another trick for pumpkin pie is to eliminate the crust completely by using ground ginger snaps to coat the lining of the pie pan and pour the filling over.

Substitutions in recipes include using wheat flour over white flour (you may need to increase the liquid in the recipe), low-fat plain yogurt to replace sour cream, and herbs and spices to replace salt. Add less sugar to recipes calling for sugar and use applesauce or other pureed fruits to replace some of the fat in quick breads. When serving desserts, display small pieces as well as fresh fruit on a platter, and pass to your guests so they can freely accept or decline. Bon Appetite!

Remember that good taste and good health can, and do coexist. While it is true that it is what we do each day that ultimately affects our health, but do not let this give you permission to overeat or be a couch potato. Behavior scientists agree that consistency is important and that family gatherings provide an opportunity to practice and share new skills. After the meal, get up and take a walk. New holiday traditions can begin this season and launch you into a healthier new year.

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