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Adapted from: Adrie Roberts, M.S., USU Extension Associate Professor, Cache County Eat Healthy Stay Healthy

Healthy Holiday Eating Tips and Recipes

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If the thought of all that holiday feasting leaves you worried about eating too much fat-laden food, or simply overeating, here are some tips to help you enjoy the holidays without expanding your waistline. Remember, many of the traditional foods served during Thanksgiving and Christmas are perfectly healthy. It's what we do to them that loads them with extra calories and fat. Let's start with the basic foods at the center of the feast.

Turkey: This traditional holiday bird is great for dieters. Avoid eating the skin (too many fat deposits). Dark meat is higher in fat and cholesterol than white meat. Turkey breast has very little fat, is full of protein, and is an important source of B vitamins.

Stuffing: Keep stuffing low in fat by sautéing onions, celery, and sage in just a tablespoon of olive or canola oil; using egg whites or egg substitutes for whole eggs, omitting extra butter and adding fat free broth. Lean turkey sausage could also be added for flavor. Use a low-sodium boxed stuffing mix and added sautéed onions, celery, apples, cooked rice, cooked wheat, etc. Add a little more broth if needed.

Gravy: Low-fat gravy is simple when you start ahead of time. Make a rich broth with the giblets, onion, celery, and herbs. Refrigerate, and then skim off fat that rises to the top (save around 56 grams of fat per cup!). Use a gravy separator to separate out fat or use clear broth and skim milk with seasonings. Heat, season, and thicken with a paste of cornstarch and water. (2 T. cornstarch and ½ cup water thickens 1 pint of broth).

Baked Yams or Sweet Potatoes: Pre-treat cooking pan by brushing or spraying with a

light coat of oil. Bake or boil yams (or mash, if desired), then season with nutmeg and cinnamon or pumpkin pie spices, or use apple or orange juice to sweeten. Skip the butter or margarine and sprinkle with butter flavoring. Sweet potatoes are a rich source of beta-carotene, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, potassium and fiber. Omit butter and excess sugar (marshmallows). Use orange juice and a sprinkling of brown sugar for flavor instead.

Regular Potatoes: A good source of vitamins and minerals. Lose the butter and heavy cream in mashed potatoes, and use sodium, fat-free chicken broth or fat-free milk and low-fat sour cream instead. Flavor with garlic and ground pepper.

Pumpkin: Pumpkin and pumpkin seeds are high in vitamin A, protein, fiber, zinc, iron and monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat. Health benefits of eating pumpkin include: healthy cardiovascular system (mono and polyunsaturated fats), healthy skin (vitamin A), healthy vision (vitamin A), decreased osteoporosis (zinc), decreased arthritis, decreased prostate enlargement and decreased colon cancer (fiber). Use egg whites or egg substitute and fat-free evaporated milk in the filling when making pie.

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Cranberries are a great source of Vitamin C and contain compounds that are believed to block certain bacteria that cause infections. Add oranges to make cranberry orange sauce to add more Vitamin C.

Homemade Rolls: Choose a recipe without eggs or cream and with minimal shortening, butter, or margarine. Use skim milk instead of whole milk or cream. For a shiny low-fat crust, brush rolls with a mixture of egg whites and water (1 egg white whisked with 1 T. water). Use whole wheat flour or part whole wheat flour in place of white flour. Baking sheets can be sprayed with non-stick spray or dust baking sheet with cornmeal instead.

Vegetables: Stir fry, sauté, or microwave vegetables with minimal oil. Top vegetables with a little lemon-butter mixture. (Mix 1 tsp. of canola-oil based margarine with ½ tsp. of lemon juice and a bit of grated lemon rind) instead of high-fat sauces. Have a variety of veggies on the table at all times. Try healthy hummus as a dip, or fat-free ranch.

Appetizers: Have plenty of fresh vegetables on hand. Use low-fat or fat-free sour cream and yogurt for dips. Nuts and dried fruits make great snacks, too.

Baked Goods: Limit recipes that call for lots of cream, eggs, butter or other fats. Or, try substituting with non-fat alternatives, such as applesauce, mashed beans and pumpkin.

Sugary Sweets: No need to eliminate the traditional homemade treats that you and your family look forward to each holiday season. Some recipes may not turn out as well if you change ingredients. But others may not even seem different. Try reducing

the amount of sugar called for in your fudge, peanut brittle, toffee and other homemade favorites. Also, consider purchasing sugar free ingredients, such as sugar-free gelatins.

Foods Rich in Fat: There are multiple ways to reduce and substitute fat in multiple recipes. One of the simplest ways is to purchase fat-free and low-fat products instead of their full-fat counterparts. These include salad dressings, sour cream, cream cheese, crackers, yogurts, milk, and more. Also, in many recipes, simply reduce the amount of fat called for.

Finally, here are a few more tips to help stay healthy through the holidays.

- Remember to be physically active to help control blood glucose levels and to lower stress levels. Plan time for it.
- Don't starve yourself before eating—you will likely eat more if you are super hungry. Offer regularly scheduled meals.
- Don't skip breakfast; but do fill up with whole grain crackers, fruit, and raw vegetables if hunger pangs strike before the big feast, and drink plenty of water.
- Get adequate amounts of sleep.
- Be careful with alcohol. It packs calories and can destroy your resolve to resist food temptations.
- Even if your host insists on you eating, remember that resisting is not rude.
- Wait 10-15 minutes before eating seconds.
- Savor your food. Ask yourself if the food is really worth it.