

# Healthier Holiday Eating

Thanksgiving's rapid approach unfortunately often means the seasonal shutdown to our best efforts at healthier eating. We happily forget about portion control and eat our way right on through Christmas and into the New Year. Too frequently our resolve to pay more attention to what and how much we eat is postponed until after January 1.

Surprisingly, the centerpiece of many holiday feasts – turkey – and many of the trimmings are actually healthy foods. That is, until we begin to make them more “special.” So let's look at ways to keep the foods central to our holidays from wrecking our meal plans.

**Turkey:** The healthiest way to prepare the turkey is roasting. Covering the turkey with a foil “tent” keeps the bird moist. Turkey breast has very little fat and provides lots of healthy protein. Dark meat is higher in fat and cholesterol than white meat. In either case, avoid eating the skin, which has fat deposits.

**Stuffing:** Homemade stuffing can be reduced in fat by sautéing onion and celery in just a tablespoon of olive or canola oil instead of butter. Use fat free broth to moisten the bread. For flavor, add lean turkey sausage. If you decide to use a boxed stuffing mix, look for one that is lower in sodium and prepare without the added butter. Add sautéed onions, celery, apples, cooked brown rice, or cooked wheat to your favorite stuffing recipe for flavor and nutrition.

**Gravy:** Low-fat gravy is simple if you start ahead of time. Make a rich broth with the giblets, onion, celery and herbs. Refrigerate and then skim off the fat that rises to the top, saving calories. You can also use a gravy separator to eliminate the fat. Or use a clear broth and skim milk with seasonings. Heat the broth and thicken with a paste of cornstarch and water (2 tablespoons cornstarch and 1/2 cup water thickens 2 cups of broth.)

**Sweet potatoes:** Use cooking spray to pre-treat the baking dish instead of butter. Bake or boil the sweet potatoes, then season with nutmeg and cinnamon, or use a little bit of apple or orange juice to sweeten. Sweet potatoes are a rich source of beta-carotene, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, potassium, and fiber so skip the butter or margarine and the excess sugar, including marshmallows.

**Mashed potatoes:** Eliminate the butter and heavy cream and substitute instead low-sodium, fat-free chicken broth or fat-free milk and low-fat sour cream. Add flavor with garlic and ground pepper.

**Pumpkin:** Pumpkin and pumpkin seeds are high in Vitamin A, protein, fiber, zinc, and iron. When making pumpkin pie, use fat-free evaporated milk and substitute egg whites instead of whole eggs. Another way to have the benefit of the nutrients in pumpkin is by serving pumpkin soup.

**Cranberries:** This rich source of Vitamin C is even better when mixed with oranges to make a relish. Look for recipes with reduced amounts of added sugar.

**Vegetables:** Stir fry, sauté, or microwave vegetables with as little oil as possible. Top vegetables with seasonings instead of high-fat sauces. For a tasty topping mix 1 teaspoon of canola-oil based margarine with 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice and a bit of grated lemon rind.

**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. Replace part of the white all-purpose flour with whole wheat flour.

**Appetizers:** Have plenty of fresh vegetables on hand. Try healthy hummus as a dip, or fat-free dressings and dips. Nuts and dried fruits make great snacks, too.

Here are a few more tips to help keep your holidays healthier:

- Remember to be physically active to help control blood glucose levels and to lower stress. Plan time for physical activity.
- Don't skip meals before the big holiday meal. You will likely eat even more if you are super-hungry.
- 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.
- Watch your portions.
- Savor your food and eat slowly. Enjoy the delicious food and the lively conversation around the table.
- Wait 10 to 15 minutes before having seconds.

If you are preparing the family dinner this year, don't forget to use the food safety tips for thawing and cooking the turkey.

- Turkey Basics: Safe Thawing: [www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/tbthaw.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/tbthaw.htm)
- Turkey Basics: Safe Cooking: [www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/tbcook.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/tbcook.htm)
- Turkey Basics: Stuffing: [www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/tbstuff.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/tbstuff.htm)

For more holiday recipes, vegetable side dishes, guilt-free desserts, recipes for giving and creative ways to use leftover turkey, go to:

[http://www.extension.org/pages/Holiday\\_Recipes\\_-\\_Vegetable\\_Side\\_Dishes,\\_Guilt-free\\_Desserts,\\_Recipes\\_for\\_Giving,\\_and\\_Creative\\_Ways\\_to\\_Use\\_Leftover\\_Turkey](http://www.extension.org/pages/Holiday_Recipes_-_Vegetable_Side_Dishes,_Guilt-free_Desserts,_Recipes_for_Giving,_and_Creative_Ways_to_Use_Leftover_Turkey)

Here are some lighter holiday recipes as well as some ideas for using up the leftover turkey. Have a healthy and happy Thanksgiving.

### **Fruity Cranberry Sauce**

1 12 oz package cranberries (about 3 cups)	1 cup sugar
1 cup chopped dried apricots	1 teaspoon dried ginger
1 ½ tablespoon tangerine or orange zest	1/3 cup honey
1 2/3 cups tangerine or orange juice	

Stir all ingredients together in a saucepan over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Cover and increase heat to boil. Boil about 10 minutes, or until the cranberries pop, stirring occasionally. Let cool; it will thicken as it cools. Store in the refrigerator.

*Yield: 12 servings, 1/4 cup each Nutrition Information per serving: 150 Calories; 0g Fat; 5g Protein; 39g Carbohydrate; 2g Fiber; 7.5mg Sodium*

### **Fresh Pumpkin Soup**

8 cups chopped fresh pumpkin	2 tablespoons lemon juice
4 cups low-sodium chicken broth	2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger root
3 small, tart apples, chopped	2 garlic cloves, minced
1 medium onion, chopped	1/2 teaspoon salt

In a 5-quart slow cooker, combine all ingredients and cook for 8 hours. Serve chunky or cool slightly, blend and reheat.

### **Guiltless Pumpkin Pie**

2 large eggs  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice (or 3/4 teaspoon each ground cinnamon and ground nutmeg)  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1 15 oz. can pumpkin  
1 5 oz. can evaporated fat free milk (about 2/3 cup)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9-inch pie plate with cooking spray; set aside. Place eggs in large bowl, beat with fork or whisk. Add sugar, spices, and salt and mix well. Stir in pumpkin and evaporated milk. Pour mixture into prepared pie plate. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until center is set. Remove from oven and cool on wire rack. Serve immediately or refrigerate until serving time. If desired, add a spoonful of low-fat whipped topping to each serving and sprinkle with additional ground cinnamon.

*Yield: 8 servings      Nutrition Information per serving: 113 calories; 2g total fat; 1g saturated fat; 55mg cholesterol; 139mg sodium; 21g total carbohydrate; 2g dietary fiber.*

### **Vegetable & Turkey Stir Fry**

1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
2 thin slices ginger root, minced (or 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger)  
1 peeled and minced garlic clove (or 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder)  
1 pound chopped vegetables, fresh or frozen  
2 cups turkey, cooked and cut into 1/2-inch cubes

Heat oil in wok or large skillet. Add ginger, garlic, vegetables, and turkey. Stir fry about 1 minute to coat with oil. Adjust heat to prevent scorching. Add 1 or 2 tablespoons of water; cover and cook for about 2 minutes until vegetables are tender. Season with 1/2 teaspoon salt, if necessary. Serve with brown rice.

*Yield: 4 servings      Nutrition Information per serving: 310 calories, 5g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 420 mg sodium, 16g total carbohydrate, 4g dietary fiber.*

### **Turkey Waldorf Salad**

1/4 cup fat free mayonnaise	2 large apples, peeled, cored, diced
1/4 cup nonfat plain yogurt	1/2 cup diced celery
3 tablespoons cider vinegar	1/2 cup grapes, halved
1/2 teaspoon curry powder	1/3 cup raisins
1 lb. cooked, skinless turkey breast, cubed	3 tablespoons walnuts, chopped

Whisk mayonnaise with yogurt, vinegar, and curry powder. Toss with remaining ingredients. Serve on lettuce leaves.

*Nutrition Information per serving: 310 calories, 4.5g total fat, 0.5g saturated fat, 95mg cholesterol, 290mg sodium, 29g total carbohydrate, 1g dietary fiber.*

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