Holiday Eating Your Way

Winter comes filled with holidays, friends, family, and food! At this time of year, foods may be higher than usual in fat and in greater abundance. Fruits and vegetables may transform into fat-laden and sugar-covered holiday delicacies. You may find yourself letting go of longstanding habits of low-fat eating in the spirit of the moment. Not to despair—you have many skills available for enjoying holiday foods. The skills presented below can help you maintain a low-fat eating style, watch portion sizes, or adopt a new healthy eating behavior of your choice. They offer both familiar and new suggestions.

Recall skills you learned in WHI to handle holiday food challenges.

- **Budget your fat intake.**
  For a day or two before you will be attending a holiday celebration, start budgeting your fat intake to offset higher fat “party” foods.

- **Be assertive and say, “no thanks.”**
  You know the fat content of foods and it is your choice about when to say, “yes, please,” or “no, thanks.”

- **Say yes to less.**
  When offered your favorite whipped cream topping, ask for a tiny amount.

- **Ask for support.**
  Before visiting family or friends, if you are comfortable, ask for their support ahead of time. Request that they accept your “no thanks” to higher fat foods or your gift of an attractive vegetable tray as an alternative to higher fat snacks.

- **Turn negatives into positives.**
  Before you attend a gathering, identify any negative self-talk you may have. Reframe the negative messages into positive ones. A negative message might be, “Only high fat foods taste good.” Reframe it into, “I’m excited to look for lower fat foods to try at this party.”
Try a new skill.

Eat mindfully.

Sounds simple, and it is. Plus, it is a repackaging of many of the skills you have already learned in WHI. But what does it mean to eat mindfully? Eating mindfully is about being aware when eating. It’s about the influence of how you eat on what you eat. Mindfulness is a concept that can be applied to any activity — walking, talking, working, vacationing, etc. It is the process of being “present” with what you are doing. For eating, it means not dividing your attention by also working, reading, or for example, thinking about the evening’s plans while you are eating.

You might wonder how mindful eating applies to holidays when food and socializing are intertwined. The beauty is that mindful eating can occur in bites. Try it — when you pick up an appetizer, a slight pause in your socializing lets you notice appearance and aromas before taking a bite. When you take a bite, savor it, noticing the texture and release of flavors. Even in swallowing, by continuing to sense the food, you might find more enjoyment from less food. Repeating the mindful eating practice during the party raises your awareness of eating.

You may find that you feel satisfied sooner than usual and, as a result, eat the amount of food that is just right for you.

The concept of mindful eating evolved from research on stress reduction by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1970s. For years, Dr. Kabat-Zinn had practiced mindfulness meditation in India, a practice of being aware and of paying attention to what is happening in the moment. Back in the United States, Dr. Kabat-Zinn applied the principles of mindfulness in his research and found that the process of bringing awareness to activities can reduce stress. Intrigued, he began a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (including mindful eating) that is still active today at the University of Massachusetts and elsewhere. For more information about mindful eating, see the resources side bar.

Holidays can present challenges to eating low-fat and maintaining an intake that is plentiful in fruits, vegetables, and grains. However, you have many skills for taking control of the situation. Your experiences in WHI have made it easier for you to identify challenges and develop plans to support holiday eating your way. Enjoy!
Holiday Eating Challenges & Skills

Potential Challenges for Holiday Eating – and Skills to Take Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE</th>
<th>SKILL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places and activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ No regular meal times</td>
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<td>☐ Eating away from home</td>
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<td>☐ Many activities involve food</td>
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<td>Foods available:</td>
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<td>☐ High-fat foods more readily available</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Not many low-fat choices available</td>
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<td>☐ More snacking throughout the day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family and friends</td>
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<td>☐ More pressure from others to eat certain foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Less support from people around me</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Concern about hurting the feelings of family or friends by refusing foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your own thoughts and emotions</td>
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<td>☐ Feeling of celebration, want to forget about low-fat eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Expect certain high-fat foods, such as holiday appetizers, snack cookies, and rich desserts</td>
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<td>☐ Less comfortable asking for lower-fat foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Other:</td>
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Resources about Mindful Eating


Websites:
- University of Massachusetts Medical School Center for Mindfulness: [http://www.umassmed.edu/cfu/](http://www.umassmed.edu/cfu/)
- Brigham and Women’s Hospital: [http://www.bwh.harvard.edu/unmed.html](http://www.bwh.harvard.edu/unmed.html) Use the search function and type in “mindful meal” to access the article, Mastering the Mindful Meal, by Stephanie Vangsness, R.D., L.D.N., C.N.S.D.
Recipe: Cranberry - Citrus Muffins

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
1 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup 2% low-fat milk
1/3 cup light evaporated milk
1 tablespoon grated orange rind
1/2 cup orange juice
1 tablespoon orange zest
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
2 large eggs
1 large egg
cooking spray
6 tablespoons granulated sugar

Preheat oven to 400°F. Combine first six ingredients (flour through salt) in a medium bowl; make a well in the center of mixture. Combine milk and next eight ingredients (milk through egg); stir well with a whisk. Add to flour mixture, stirring just until moist. Spoon batter into muffin cups coated with cooking spray. Sprinkle sugar evenly over batter.

Bake at 400°F for 18 minutes or until done. Remove from pans immediately and cool on a wire rack.

Makes 18 servings (1 muffin per serving)

Fat: 2.5 grams per serving

Carbohydrates: 19 grams per serving

Calories: 100 per serving

Recipe from Patty Healy, Cooking Light, Sept. 1993

* Substitutions:
  * 1 cup whole wheat flour (lightly packed) may be substituted for 1 cup all-purpose flour.
  * The equivalent amount of vanilla soy milk may be substituted for the low-fat milk.
  * The equivalent amount of mashed, plain tofu with 1 1/2 tsp lemon juice may be substituted for ricotta cheese.

Thank you for your participation in the WHI Extension Study.

You are part of the answer!

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