Healthier Eating at the Holidays

By Kathryn Anderson

Turkey roasting in the oven, moist cookies and cake sitting on the counter, the crackling from the fire place and warm laughing from friends and family alike, nothing brings the family together more than the array of food traditions and festivities during the holiday season. The holidays are a time to celebrate with the people that you love and care about. It is the one time of the year from Thanksgiving to New Years, you get to see everyone, celebrate and have a good time.

The main activity that happens when you are gathering with your friends and family is eating. Some individuals can gain up to 10 pounds in the course of the month and a half that we are feasting on the most delicious meals of the year. Think about Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas Eve dinner, and Christmas dinner alone; how many calories do you think that you consume? That doesn’t include that snacks that you munch on, the appetizers, alcoholic beverages or dessert. This article will provide ideas that can help to cut down the pounds but still let you enjoy all the exciting things that the holidays have to offer.

One way that you can cut down the food consumption is limiting the amount of hors d’oeuvres that you eat. When you do this, you are more likely to have a satisfying and healthier meal. One thing that you can try if you are a host is to have family members pass trays around. This will help with the mingling and keep all family members and friends involved while cutting down the amount of food you actually eat. It seems almost obvious that if someone is circulating around the room or around the house with a tray then you will eat less than if you were to have plates of food on a table that you can go up to at any point in the evening. When trays are being passed around there is a slower approach to eating which helps to make you feel fuller in a short amount of time so you don’t eat as much.

If you are really committed to making your holidays healthier for the whole family, then you can always change parts of the menu to make less healthy things disappear. While foods like baked brie and chicken wrapped in bacon all sound really great, they are full of unneeded calories. Other options you could serve instead are bite size pieces of marinated chicken, and healthy cheeses and spreads like hummus and thick salsa. Surprisingly, if you have the trays
circulating, and have a plate of fresh veggies to dip in hummus or a plate of antipasto sitting on the table, people will feast on the healthy appetizers that are sitting on the table. Provide something like napkins during the appetizer time to limit guest’s portions sizes. If you provide even small plates, your guests might be piling things on their plate trying to get as much as they can. This way they can graze and come and get what they want as needed.

All good hosts keep their guests hydrated. Maybe not hydrated but keep them with a drink in their hands. People tend to feel fuller when they have a stomach full of liquid. Drinking at least a glass of water or any other beverage fills up your stomach so when it comes time to eat there is less room for food. Some holiday drinks have tons of calories in them as well. Consider eggnog. Eggnog has over 300 calories in one serving and a lot of fat. Limit the portion sizes of eggnog that you provide. Instead of a mug, serve it in small glasses, or even a shot glass.

At dinner, provide items like salads and roasted root vegetables to encourage your guests to healthy eating. You will be surprised what people end up eating if it is provided to them. Most people to be good guests will always eat what you offer.

Dessert is probably the time that can hurt you the worst. Dessert foods have so many extra unnecessary calories, sugar, and fat. One thing that you never want to tell yourself is “there’s always room for dessert.” If you are feeling full then you are full. Listen to the things that your body is telling you. If you know that you are a dessert person, then don’t eat the extra serving of mashed potatoes, rolls with butter, or green bean casserole. Save room for the warm gooey apple pie with vanilla ice cream.

Remember live in moderation. The holidays are a time that all Americans cheat on their strict diets and live a little. Still eat what you love, just have smaller portions, exercise and leave the 10 pounds for the rest of the guests.