

How to make your recipes healthy and still taste good!

This could be the year that you and your family start a new tradition of healthy eating! Like many of you, I grew up with all of the yummy high fat, high calorie holiday foods that we all love. But after my father was diagnosed with heart disease and I saw the increase in the cancer rates related to high fat diets, I wanted to see if I could make healthy foods that actually taste good. If something doesn't taste good, then you can be pretty sure no one wants to eat it!



From experimenting with my recipes, I discovered it is really easy to modify many of your favorite dishes. I have done “taste tests” with some of my clients, friends and patients and they either couldn't tell the difference or sometimes even preferred the healthier version. These recipes aren't totally calorie or fat free. They are simply healthier versions of some usual favorites.

When modifying recipes, the main goals are to:

1. Decrease total fat and calories
2. Decrease saturated fats and trans-fats.
3. Decrease sugar content.
4. Decrease salt content.
5. Use food preparation techniques that preserve all the good nutrients in your food.
6. Enjoy your food!

Modification Suggestions

1. Chicken, turkey and fish are excellent choices for the main course. Be sure to trim any excess fat and avoid eating the skin on chicken and turkey.
2. Chill your drippings from turkey and other meats and remove hardened (saturated) fats before using to make your gravy or broth.
3. Cook roasts, chili, stews in advance and refrigerate overnight. Fat will rise to the top and you can skim it off. You can also use a “fat separator” cup.
4. When making tacos, chili or other dishes, use a colander to rinse cooked ground beef with hot water before adding to the dish you are preparing.
5. Stew celery and onion used in dishes in broth rather than cooking in butter or oil.
6. Use cornstarch instead of flour for thickening sauces and gravies. It usually takes less cornstarch to thicken and it is lower in calories.
7. Use low fat milk or evaporated skimmed milk instead of whole or heavy cream in gravies, cream soups, cream pies, puddings and sauces. It gives them a rich taste without adding as much fat.

8. Avoid recipes that call for sweetened condensed milk. It has 982 calories and 27 gms of fat in 1 cup!
9. You can reduce the amount of sugar in casseroles (sweet potatoes, baked beans, etc.). Start by reducing the sugar by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$. For example, if the recipe calls for 1 cup sugar, only use $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{2}{3}$ cup.
10. Substitute light cream cheese and low fat sour cream for the regular high fat versions in salads, desserts, frostings and dips. You will not be able to taste the difference!
11. Use less margarine (trans-fats) or butter in mashed potatoes and other vegetables. You can usually cut this amount in half. Be sure to serve some vegetables without rich or fatty sauces (cheese sauce, etc.).
12. The amount of fat used to make breads, muffins, cookies, cakes and other baked goods can be reduced. Start by cutting the amount by $\frac{1}{4}$. You can substitute equal amounts of applesauce for the fat, if desired.
13. Use "Dream Whip" made with low-fat milk as a topping for pies and desserts. Non-dairy whipped toppings are full of additives, gums and saturated or trans-fats.
14. Make piecrusts with oil or non-trans-fat margarine instead of shortening or lard. They all have about the same calories, but shortening and lard have more saturated fat. Use non-stick cooking spray instead of butter to coat your pans.
15. Use low-fat cheese in recipes.

How to get through birthdays, holidays, pitch-ins, birthdays and parties without gaining weight!

- The key to holiday survival is MODERATION and also "MAINTAIN, NOT GAIN".
- Around every corner will be lurking someone's "Once a Year" goodies. We all think, "It's the holidays" so it's OK to indulge. I'll just lose the weight after the "New Year". But losing that weight is much harder than gaining it and not nearly as much fun!
- If you go to a pitch-in or party, look over the table to see what you really want. Don't waste calories on foods you don't really love. Fill up on the healthy stuff first! Then take small portions of the high-calorie foods. You may find you are satisfied with a small amount!
- Bring your own lower-calorie snacks to the party. Good snack choices are vegetables with low-fat dips, apples, pears and grapes with cheese, celery and peanut butter, deviled eggs, baked or reduced-fat chips, pretzels, etc.
- Look for healthy snack recipes on the Internet.



- Take a small serving of dessert. The more fruit you eat, the more it satisfies that sweet craving.
- Don't forget about exercise during the holidays. It will help burn off some of the extra calories and relieve stress.
- Watch how much alcohol you drink. Not only does it have calories, it may affect your judgement.
- If you eat more than you meant to (it happens!), do not be self-critical, just eat less at the next meal.
- Celebrate and focus on what the holidays are all about: sharing with others and spending time with those you love.



Authored by a Community Cancer Center dietitian.