

How To Enjoy The Holidays Without Spiking Your Blood Sugar!

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



This year, enjoy a guilt-free holiday meal with some recipe tweaks and simple food swaps. Here are 10 ideas from registered dietitian, Susan McQuillan, MS, RDN, CDN.

Holiday meals can be a challenge when you're watching your weight, counting carbs, or both. Rather than let your health fall by the wayside this season, take these holiday dinner tips to heart, and try some of these simple ideas for switching out much of the sugar, starch and unhealthy fats traditionally cooked into a holiday dinner.

1. Don't Skip Breakfast.

Be sure to eat your regular meals throughout the day, especially breakfast. Though some people like to "bank" their calories for a special occasion or holiday dinner, that method often backfires and results in eating even more calories overall from being so hungry by the time you finally sit down to eat. And for people with diabetes, eating little or nothing all day, and then overeating at the big meal, can wreak havoc with blood sugar levels.

2. Don't Stuff the Stuffing.

The easiest and tastiest way to cut unhealthy fat and calories from turkey is to slide fresh herbs and a little olive oil between the skin and flesh all over the bird before roasting. Discard the skin after

cooking and just before eating. And instead of filling the bird with bread stuffing that soaks up so much turkey fat, prepare a separate, less starchy, less fatty dressing. For instance, in a casserole dish, combine precooked wild rice, cubed apples, sliced celery, chopped onion, and, if you like, broiled lean turkey sausage or sautéed mushrooms; moisten the mixture with a little broth and bake next to the turkey, rather than in it, until heated through.

3. Make a Lighter But Still Delicious Gravy.

Thick, greasy, old-fashioned gravy that begins with a butter and flour roux may be classic holiday fare, but there are equally tasty and healthier ways to moisten and flavor your meal. Keep it simple by combining degreased pan drippings with low-sodium chicken or turkey broth and a splash of apple juice or cider for a light and fail-proof "au jus" sauce. For degreasing, pour drippings into a gravy separator or measuring cup. Let stand for a few minutes, until the mixture separates, then carefully skim off the fat that rises to the top.

4. Mash Your Potatoes With Fewer Carbs.

To cut the starch and still enjoy creamy whipped potato flavor, mash together equal parts boiled potatoes and cauliflower. Add plain yogurt and olive oil in place of some or all of the traditional heavy cream and butter, and stir in lots of sliced scallions, chives, roasted garlic or onion bits, for extra flavor. Mashed

potatoes should take up no more than one-fourth of your holiday plate.

5. Yam I Am.

Sweet potatoes and yams are fine but steer clear of candied yams and marshmallow-topped sweets. Instead, try a savory seasoning, using olive oil instead of butter, and herbs such as rosemary, thyme, sage or even chipotle chili powder. Since starchy vegetables are limited on a diabetic diet, you may have to choose between mashed potatoes and sweets, but if you can't choose, stick to just a heaping spoonful or two of each. Overall, limit starchy vegetables (including stuffing and other grain foods) to 1/4 of your total plate of food.



JYMANN DAVIS
M.S., CFCS

FAMILY & COMMUNITY
 HEALTH
 EXTENSION AGENT

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE
 EXTENSION SERVICE-
 GALVESTON COUNTY

<http://galveston.agrilife.org/fcs/>

6. Get Your Greens.

Whether it's green beans, Brussels sprouts, or a salad (or any other non-starchy vegetable, such as carrots or cauliflower), fill your plate with a green veggie bonanza. Non-starchy vegetables should take up half your plate. Avoid heavy sauces, dressings, and seasonings; instead, toss cut-up vegetables in just enough olive oil to coat and roast at medium-high heat—approximately 375° for 15 to 20 minutes, or until tender. Roasting this way helps veggies stay crisp on the outside, tender on the inside and full of flavor. Adding lots of ripe, juicy vegetables or fruit to green salads, such as halved cherry tomatoes, orange sections, or sliced persimmon or pears, can make it easier to use less dressing.

7. Make Cranberry Sauce Sans Sugar.

Cranberries are so tart they have to be sweetened somehow. But that doesn't mean you have to add sugar when making fresh cranberry sauce. Some people use natural sugar substitutes like Splenda or small amounts of agave syrup, honey, molasses, coconut palm sugar or maple syrup, some of which are lower on the glycemic index than sugar but still high in carbohydrates and can still boost your blood sugar levels. So no matter how you sweeten your sauce, limit the amount you eat to a couple of spoonfuls. A good starter recipe for fresh cranberry sauce is as follows: Follow cranberry package directions, adding cinnamon sticks and whole cloves to 12 ounces of cranberries along with water, but omitting the sugar. Once the berries pop, remove from heat and stir in no more than ¼ cup natural sweetener. At the same time, add two teaspoons of balsamic or

raspberry vinegar. Once the mixture cools, for more sweetening power, you can add a few drops of stevia, or to taste.

8. Go Crazy for Crustless Pumpkin Pie.

Bake a pumpkin pie without a crust, and you'll save approximately 98 calories, 7 g carb, 4 g fat per slice (1/8 of a pie). Following directions for regular pumpkin pie, pouring the filling directly into a lightly oiled pie plate. Bake a 9-inch round pie at 325° for 50-60 minutes or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. If you want a little "crunch" to make up for lost crunch, sprinkle lightly with finely chopped nuts or crushed graham cracker crumbs when the pie comes out of the oven. The American Diabetes Association recommends passing on one of the starchy side dishes at dinner in order to replace it with a small serving of dessert to be sure you stay within a safe range of carbs and calories.

9. Resist Being Tempted by Leftovers.

When dinner is done, clear off the table and pack up leftovers right away. This way, you avoid the temptation to continue picking from the table. If you're not part of the clean-up crew, plan another after-dinner project to keep you busy until the table is clear.

10. Take a Walk.

Organize a group walk immediately after dinner (or after the cleanup). This will get you away from all the food and drink, help you digest a big meal, and give you a little exercise to help get your blood sugar down.

Source: Written by Susan McQuillan, MS, RDN, CDN



BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH CANADIAN BACON

2 pounds fresh Brussels sprouts
1 tablespoon reduced-calorie margarine
2 shallots
3 ounces Canadian bacon, cut into 1/4 inch dice
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt (to taste)
Freshly ground pepper (to taste)

After slicing off the stem ends, slice the Brussels sprouts thin. Heat margarine in a large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add shallots and Canadian bacon, sautéing and stirring frequently until shallots are soft and bacon is browned (about 5 minutes). Toss in the Brussels sprouts and continue to cook, stirring frequently until Brussels sprouts are cooked (about 5 minutes). Add lemon juice and continue to cook for another minute. Serve hot.

Yield: 12 servings.

52 calories (20% calories from fat), 4g protein, 1g total fat (0.3g saturated fat), 8g carbohydrates,

DID YOU KNOW?

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Galveston County offers diabetes educational classes.

For more information, call 281-309-5049