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Wise Notes for Consumers

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Healthy and Fun Holiday Treats

Have you noticed that many of the foods we enjoy during the holidays are typically not all that healthy? Think about the treats that are made out of candy, cookies, and frostings that are put together in the shape of turkeys, pilgrim hats, and snowmen. These foods are fun, but often add extra calories, fat, sugar, and salt to our diet. Consider planning some holiday snacks that are not only fun but also healthy.

Healthy snacks fit into the MyPlate food groups and include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy. Children may get a sizable portion of their daily nutrients from snacks, so the content of the snacks should contribute to their MyPlate recommendations. Check out choosemyplate.gov for more information. Nebraska Extension has shared some ideas to help you create healthy snacks in fun designs:

- ❖ Use whole grain cereals to make cereal treats. Then make holiday shapes such as turkeys or Christmas trees.
- ❖ Use dark chocolate for dipping or drizzling to get more antioxidants.
- ❖ Serve a healthy trail mix made of peanuts, pretzels, whole grain cereals and a few pieces of candy in an individual bag or cup decorated with fun holiday cutouts instead of cookies or candies.
- ❖ Use whole grain flour when making cutout cookies, and decorate with a light, colorful glaze.

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- ❖ Serve an oatmeal cookie on a plate surrounded by thin slices of red and green apples fanned out like turkey feathers. Use raisins for the eyes and cheese pieces for the feet and bill.
- ❖ Serve fun snacks like apple smiles made from apple slices, peanut butter, and miniature marshmallows, or ants on a log made from celery, peanut butter, and raisins. They aren't necessarily holiday themed, but they are fun any time of the year.
- ❖ Choose holiday cookie recipes that include fruits such as dried cranberries, dates, or raisins. And, if adding chocolate chips, choose dark chocolate.
- ❖ Serve hot chocolate made from scratch with fat free or low fat milk. Or, if choosing instant hot chocolate powder, choose ones with less sugar and added calcium.

Holiday Treats

2 cups crispy rice cereal
 2 cups quick cooking oats
 1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 ½ cup light corn syrup
 ½ cup peanut butter
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 ½ cup raisins or dried cranberries
 ½ cup dark chocolate chips

1. Combine cereal and oats in a large bowl and set aside. Bring brown sugar and syrup to a boil in a saucepan over medium high heat, stirring constantly until sugar is dissolved.
2. Remove from heat and stir in peanut butter and vanilla. Pour peanut butter mixture over cereal, stirring until coated. Let stand 10 minutes. Stir in raisins and chips. Make into holiday shapes, or press into 9 x 13 pan. Makes 24 servings. Each serving contains 124 calories, 4 grams fat, 49 mg sodium and 1.5 grams fiber.

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