

LIFESTYLES WITH SYLVIA



Dear Friends,

Welcome back! This month we're going to focus on the scariest time of year... for your waistline, that is. I'm talking about the holidays, of course, but don't worry—I've got a number of tips to share to help you navigate the dangerous pitfalls of holiday eating.

First of all, if you're reading this, you made it safely through Halloween—congratulations! Now do yourself a favor: if you have any extra candy lying around, get rid of it. By reducing temptation, you'll have a much better chance of staying on the straight and narrow between now and the first big challenge of the holiday season: Thanksgiving dinner.

Healthy Holiday Eating Tips for Thanksgiving

Looking forward to Thanksgiving dinner? Keep these tips in mind and you won't end up looking back on it full of regret:

Don't arrive hungry. When we're hungry, we eat more and we eat fast, so be sure to eat a wholesome breakfast and lunch on the big day to avoid going overboard come dinner time.

Remember, Thanksgiving dinner is not an all-you-can-eat buffet. Just because it's Thanksgiving doesn't mean you should throw all your good habits out the window. As with any meal, fill half your plate with vegetables, one quarter with a lean meat and the rest with a starchy vegetable or a whole-grain. Then eat slowly and stop as soon as you're satisfied.

When it comes to the turkey, go skinless. One of the greatest things about turkey is that its fat can be easily removed. Simply ditch the skin and you've got one of the leanest sources of protein available (it has about half the saturated fat found in red meat). Fill your plate with a four ounce serving, and keep in mind that dark meat is higher in fat than light meat.

Side dishes—watch your portion size. Instead of loading your plate with mashed potatoes and cranberries, go for smaller portions of side dishes. As a result, you'll be able to sample all of your options without filling up too fast. In the end, always let moderation be your guide.

Make the conscious decision to limit high fat items. It may be difficult, but cutting back on the fried foods and creamy dishes that scream “high fat” is the best way to you’re your Thanksgiving dinner under control. Not sure what to watch out for? Mashed potatoes are usually made with butter and milk; green bean casseroles are often prepared with cream of mushroom soup, cheese and milk and topped with fried onions; and candied yams are loaded with cream, sugar and marshmallows. After all, if you can’t control the ingredients that go into a dish, simply limit yourself to a smaller helping of it. Once again, make moderation your mantra.

Drink plenty of water. In addition to helping keep your stomach full, delicious and refreshing (not to mention calorie free) water will counteract the dehydration caused by alcohol and coffee.

Sweat before you eat. Nothing makes calories more guilt-free than feeling like you’ve earned them, so come to SRC for a special class or to use the equipment before your holiday feasting begins (we’re open until 1:00 pm on Thanksgiving Day). Can’t make it to the gym? Take a walk or run or go for a bike ride. Or maybe this is the year to sign up for your area’s annual Turkey Trot. No matter what activity you choose though, just get moving—you’re guaranteed to enjoy your meal all the more for having burned those calories beforehand!

Healthy Holiday Cooking Tips for Thanksgiving

For those of you who will be dusting off your chef’s hat this Thanksgiving, be sure to keep these healthy cooking tips in mind:

Use the substitutes. Instead of the usual high fat ingredients that go into Thanksgiving dinner, try using low-fat or fat-free substitutes. For example, offer steamed vegetables in the colors of the rainbow as a side dish to ensure high nutrients and low calories.

Employ healthy cooking techniques. The healthiest cooking methods include baking, boiling, poaching, steaming, grilling and dry sautéing.

Lay off the sodium. By using more herbs and less salt while cooking your Thanksgiving dinner, you’ll both reduce your guest’s sodium intake and increase their health through the critical antioxidants that come loaded in herbs.

Offer up seasonal produce grown locally. Visit your local farmers’ market to purchase the most beautiful, tasty and economical fruits and vegetables for your holiday meal.

Be smart about the bread. If you’re serving bread with your meal, stick to whole grain rolls, which are loaded with fiber. Instead of butter, offer your guests olive oil for dipping—it’s delicious and far more nutritious.

Offer options for dessert. It's hard to imagine Thanksgiving without the traditional seasonal fruit pies, but also offer your guests fresh fruit of the season, which will be bursting with flavor and rich in nutrients.

Experiment with new recipes. If you're having a hard time upping the healthiness of your old recipes, why not try some new ones? Be sure to incorporate the best the fall season has to offer, such as cranberries, squash, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, apples, beets and pears, and you might just discover a new family favorite.

Holiday Season 101

Hopefully these tips will help you get through Thanksgiving, but what about the rest of the holiday season? After all, Thanksgiving is only the beginning, right?

To help you get through the next two months, try keeping a food journal. By writing down everything you eat you'll be able to keep an accurate account of what and how much you are actually consuming. As a result, you'll be able to get through all of the upcoming holiday parties and celebrations with the least amount of guilt and the most amount of pleasure.

Also, remember that even during the holidays each meal should be viewed not in isolation, but as part of a well balanced diet. While it may be difficult to hold back today, tomorrow will always bring yet another opportunity to enjoy the delicious tastes that holiday foods have to offer!

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at Sylviae9@aol.com. Also be sure to visit our website for some wonderful holiday recipes brought to you by our very own Carrie.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous praise of this column. It is a great honor to serve you and to be part of such an exuberant exercise community! May the holidays shower all of you and your families with good health and good fortune.

Until next time, happy healthful eating,

Sylvia

November 2009