

Be a Healthy Holiday Host

If you are hosting a holiday party this year, use the following ideas to ensure you offer plenty of nutritious fare for health-conscious guests.

Beverages

Offer low and non-calorie drinks such as water, iced or hot teas, seltzer water, club soda or diet soft drinks. If you serve alcoholic beverages, choose lighter items, such as light beer, wine and offer low calorie or diet mixers for liquor.

Appetizers/Snacks

Serve light items like fresh vegetable platters with low-fat dips including hummus, bean dip and salsa, fruit and cheese trays, shrimp cocktail, whole grain crackers, bruschetta and nuts.

Meats

Choose lean cuts of meat, poultry and seafood. Keep them lean by using healthy cooking methods (broiling, grilling, stewing, baking, steaming, or roasting) rather than frying. Trim excess fat off before or after cooking and remove skin from poultry before serving.

Side Dishes

Offer vegetable sides in addition to tradition side dishes. In addition, use these ideas to make traditional dishes healthier:

- Lower the fat in soups, sauces and gravies: Use a slotted spoon to skim the fat off of the top. Or you can chill these items in the refrigerator and skim off any fat that rises to the top. You can also add ice cubes and the fat will harden around them.
- Make gravies with broth rather than pan drippings. If you are making cream or white sauces, use fat free milk and soft tub or liquid margarine.
- Lighten up stuffing or dressing: Use low-fat chicken broth instead of pan drippings or butter, choose whole grain bread and boost flavor with herbs, spices, dried fruit, or nuts.
- Flavor mashed potatoes with low-fat chicken broth instead of cream or butter.
- Top casseroles with toasted almonds instead of fried onion rings.
- Substitute high fat ingredients with their low-fat or fat free versions
- Use nonstick cooking spray instead of oil or butter

Desserts

Provide lighter desserts, such as angel food cake, chocolate covered strawberries or even pumpkin pie. Or keep portions in check with indulgent desserts by serving dessert trays with bite-size samples. You can even modify your favorite recipes: baked items can be lightened by using egg whites or substitutes in place of whole eggs, replacing up to half of the fat with a fruit puree and reducing the sugar by up to 25 percent.

General Tips

- Try sit down meals rather than buffet style.

- Have an appetizer & dessert party or a simple dinner party instead of appetizers **AND** dinner **AND** dessert.
- Set small plates out at the table to encourage smaller portions.
- Create a new family tradition that is not centered on food.