

Tips for Nutrient-Rich Holiday Eating

The holiday season is a time for enjoying and celebrating, and food plays a big part in these festivities. Eating plenty of nutrient-rich foods, and paying attention to how much you eat, will help you and your family eat better and smarter during the holidays and throughout the year. Try some of these simple tips from **food and nutrition expert Mary Abbott Hess**, LHD, MS, RD, LD, FADA, to help you savor all the season has to offer.

ENJOY

- When enjoying a holiday party buffet, challenge yourself to fill your plate with the most nutritious choices by choosing brightly colored vegetables, fresh cut fruit, grilled lean beef, chicken or seafood; low-fat cheese cubes, and a whole grain roll or fiber-rich crackers.
- When you're at a holiday party, reach for a handful of mixed nuts for protein and fiber instead of sugary candy.
- When cruising the buffet, toss some chopped nuts, sunflower seeds or shredded low-fat sharp cheese on top of any salad or side dish to get added crunch, flavor and nutrients.
- Sweeten a holiday party by offering to bring a dish of nutrient-rich seasonal vegetables such as winter squash, parsnips, rutabaga, sweet potatoes and beets. Roast or grill winter vegetables for deep flavor, simmer them in broth, or steam them and drizzle with a touch of olive oil and lemon juice.

CELEBRATE

- Give festive parties a nutrient-rich twist by offering ready-to-eat vegetables or slices of toasted whole grain tortillas paired with avocado, bean dips, vegetable salsas or low-fat dips.
- Create a hearty, broth-based soup full of seasonal vegetables and lean meat or beans, or chili topped with a dollop of low-fat, plain yogurt, as a simple but perfect meal during the cold winter season. Serve with whole grain or enriched rolls.
- When friends and family visit for the holidays, keep meals simple and nutritious to allow for more quality time together and less time in the kitchen.
 - For breakfast, set out bowls of fresh fruits like orange segments, blueberries, kiwi and strawberries. Add a selection of low-fat cottage cheese or yogurt and your favorite chopped nuts or whole grain cereal for a make-your-own parfait bar.
 - For an energizing lunch, set out mixed greens, thinly sliced peppers and carrots, cauliflower or broccoli flowerets, roasted beets, and lean protein, such as skinless poultry, fish or beans, and chopped hard-cooked eggs and let everyone make their own salad.
 - Dazzle visitors' visions of sugarplums by offering a delicious cheese course as a dessert option, with a medley of dried apricots, cranberries, plums, figs, and almonds with a variety of cheeses
- Serve mini versions of holiday appetizers with a nutrient-rich twist:
 - Cherry tomatoes stuffed with tuna or chicken salad
 - Smoked salmon on halves of small potatoes with a sprig of dill
 - Thin crust pizza with low-fat mozzarella and vegetables on a whole wheat crust cut into bite sized slices
 - Roast pork loin on mini-skewers with apples and roasted sweet potatoes
 - Spritzers of 100% orange or grapefruit juice in sparkling water



EXPLORE NUTRIENT-RICH RESOURCES ONLINE:

- For more nutrient-rich tips and tools to help you this holiday season:
 - Get a personalized eating plan based on MyPyramid recommendations at: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramid/index.aspx>
 - Search for great-tasting nutrient-rich recipes, meal ideas, tips and tools to take the guesswork out of healthy eating at www.NutrientRichFoods.org

Tips and information provided by Mary Abbott Hess, LHD, MS, RD, LD, FADA, a partner in Culinary Nutrition Associates, LLC. She is past president of The American Dietetic Association, former chairman of The American Institute of Wine & Food, and a co-author of *A Healthy Head Start*. Recently she has coordinated a culinary elective for the Walter Payton High School in Chicago and worked with the McCormick Boys & Girls Club in establishing a children's gardening project to teach children about healthful food.

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