

Holiday Eating

Celebrating the Holidays with Food

Holidays are a special time. They are a time to reconnect with family and friends and spend quality time together. Holidays are also a time that many of us associate with special meals and foods. Many holidays – Thanksgiving, Nowruz, Ramadan, Christmas, Hanukkah, and others are celebrated with food. These [holiday foods](#) are often higher in sugars, fats and oils, and calories than the foods we typically eat on a day-to-day basis.



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In this article, we will be reviewing some healthy eating tips to help you navigate [holiday eating](#) more confidently while maintaining your healthy eating goals without missing out on the flavours of the holidays!

Tip 1: Modify the recipes

- If you are doing the cooking and baking for your loved ones, cut down on the amount of added fats and oil and sugars in the recipes where possible.

Tip 2: Mind your stomach

- You might be tempted to arrive to the holiday gathering very hungry so that you can load up on your favourite foods. However, the hungrier you are, the more you tend to eat and even overeat. This can leave you feeling uncomfortably full and out of control with your eating.
- Instead, make sure you have your regularly scheduled meals and snacks before your holiday gathering. In doing so, your hunger level will be better controlled, and your stomach won't be overriding your brain's food decision making.
- Eating mindfully can be a helpful strategy to get the most out of your meals and eat according to your body's needs.

Tip 3: Be choosy with your “must-have” foods

- Before loading up your plate with the tasty goodies, see what is available and pick your top food choices. Choose foods that you wouldn't normally eat in a typical week.
- If the foods you selected don't satisfy you or don't taste nearly as good as you anticipated, don't pressure yourself to finish them. Offer them to someone else or politely leave them on your plate.

Tip 4: Mind your Portions

- When portioning your plate, load half of it with as many vegetable-based dishes as you wish.
- Next, load a quarter of your plate with your choice of lean protein choices (eg. chicken, beef, fish, tofu, beans, etc.). Choose grilled, baked, steamed, or boiled options as they are lower in fats, instead of deep-fried options.
- Fill the last quarter of your plate with dishes that consist of higher fibre grains and/or starches (e.g., brown rice, sweet potato, quinoa, etc.).
- Sauces and gravies – another common holiday staple – are often high in saturated fats and calories. If you wish to add some to your meal, enjoy them in moderation.

Tip 5: Hydrate with unsweetened drinks

- Where possible choose beverages that don't contain any added sugars. Alternatively, have a smaller amount of a regularly sweetened drink.
- If you will be consuming alcohol, we recommend drinking no more than 2-3 standard drinks. Enjoy alcohol with your meal and alternate with a glass of water to ensure that you stay well hydrated.
- Learn more about [healthy drinks](#).



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Holidays are a time for celebration, and food plays an important part of that celebration. These special foods are often connected to our emotions and memories and provide us with a source of comfort. Leave the guilt behind and any other negative feelings that get in the way from allowing you to fully enjoy yourself.

In the meantime, the tips and suggestions listed in this article can help guide you in mindfully enjoying your holiday foods without completely ditching your healthy eating efforts. If you happen to overindulge more than you initially planned, remember that tomorrow is a new day, and you can get back on track then!

