

You don't have to throw in the candy canes to maintain your weight this holiday season. With a little extra planning you'll ease right through family dinners and holiday office parties—and still have your share of festive cheer!

Healthy Holiday Eating



By Astrid Van Den Broek

What's your holiday calorie strategy? Planning on "saving" your calories all day by noshing on veggies so you can sink your teeth into as many phylo-wrapped brie and cranberry triangles as you can at the night's soiree? Perhaps you plan to splurge freely, then perform due penance at the gym the next morning. Or maybe you'll survive the holidays by living in complete denial—nothing but raw veggies and sparkling water will pass your lips. Sadly, none of these strategies work when it comes to surviving the holiday party season. "It's a festive time of year," says Dr. Joey Shulman, vice-president of nutrition at Truestarhealth.com, a health promotion website. "Food and drink is part of our enjoyment so be kind to yourself." That means putting impractical eating strategies aside and focusing on maintaining your weight, not gaining or losing it. Here are some tips on getting through the holidays healthfully.

The Buffet Dinner

Saving calories will come back to bite you when you face a tempting buffet at the end of the day on an empty stomach. Once you see those yummy hors d'oeuvre, dips and desserts, you will likely overindulge. Instead, fill up on not only low-calorie vegetables, but foods that will truly satiate you, suggests Shulman. "Go for protein and fat because they make you feel full. Try a handful of nuts or yogurt," she recommends.

The Open Bar

Alcohol calories rack up fast—one five-ounce glass of red wine equals one piece of bread in calories (approximately 100). If you do indulge, rethink your drink and reach for lighter choices, white wine and lighter coolers. Keep hydrated and to ensure that you don't drink excessively, Shulman recommends having an extra glass of water for every alcoholic drink you consume.

The Kitchen

Substitute items, plain and simple, recommends Ruth Frechman, a Burbank California-based registered dietitian. "Use non-fat milk in mashed potatoes, and serve vegetables without sauces, thereby avoiding the fat from margarine or butter.