



Balance and Moderation best at holiday parties

Food should always be enjoyed, especially during the holidays.

How we go about indulging, however, can make a significant difference in the amount of weight we need to resolve to lose in the new year. To keep enjoyment of holiday eating in balance with health, try the motto, "Think moderation, not deprivation." For help in applying this adage, here are some proactive tips that can minimize the damage while maximizing the enjoyment of seasonal delights.

1. Start your day with a good breakfast. Starving throughout the day to be able to eat later triggers the natural response to binge and results in overeating.

2. Have a high-protein snack before heading off to the party. Research shows that high-protein foods have the greatest satiety value and can help reduce the desire for overconsuming those special goodies that are so high in sugar and fat (and calories).

3. Enjoy moderate amounts of the special foods you love. Because holiday parties often have many food choices, select smaller portion sizes and limit those holiday goodies that are really "calorie-dense."

4. Calorie-dense foods don't easily fill you up, but they do provide loads of calories. Calorie-dilute foods generally have high water content and might be rich in dietary fiber. For perspective: one caramel candy, three walnut halves, 11 grapes and 17 pretzel sticks each contain about 40 calories. Choosing the lower-calorie snack foods can fill you up without so many calories.

5. Consciously slow down your eating, especially for the foods you really enjoy. Let eating be both a social and sensory experience that is fully enjoyed, not a race to the finish.

6. Given the choice to have a conversation sitting or standing, choose standing. The body uses about twice as many calories standing as it does when sitting.

7. If you plan to drink alcoholic beverages, always eat something before drinking so that you are not drinking on an empty stomach. The release of inhibitions, from alcohol rapidly going to the head, can readily express itself in the form of mindless calorie consumption. Food in the stomach slows down the absorption of alcohol into the

blood and, thus, slows delivery to the brain.

Also, alcohol contains almost as many calories as does fat. When alcohol is mixed with foods containing fat, such as liqueur-filled chocolates, the extra calories are likely to end up as extra body fat.

8. Plan ahead on food and hydration. Going to a party hungry and thirsty can readily backfire if you are planning on limiting calories.

9. In addition to starting out well hydrated, stay hydrated during the party. Consider having a glass of water or diet soda between each alcoholic beverage. This can help you to maintain hydration and avoid excessive alcohol consumption.

10. If you are going to more than one party, first and foremost, have a designated driver. Nibble lightly at the first party so you can still enjoy food at the second party.

11. Stay active. Seek out opportunities to move, especially if changes in your schedule edge out your typical exercise activities.

12. Since being happy is good for one's health, don't stress out about any of the 11 tips that precede this one.

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