

Eating Well at Christmas

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Good food and great company is one of life's most wonderful pleasures. Most people enjoy sharing good food and good times with friends and family. But, the lead up to Christmas can be very stressful; and it seems to start earlier each year, with workplace Christmas parties often starting in November. It's easy to overindulge in not so healthy foods at this time, but eating well doesn't mean deprivation of all things celebratory. With a little planning and preparation it is possible to stay on track with your healthy eating plan and still enjoy the festivities.

So the challenge is how to maintain healthy eating over the holiday season, which is traditionally a time when we let our guard down and throw caution to the wind? Well, it's about enjoying the treat foods in moderation (YES, there is a place for treat foods in a healthy diet), and enjoying summer fruits and vegetables in abundance, and perhaps a tippie of your favourite beverage. Remember that we should eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day for good health. One serve of fruit equals 1 medium piece of fruit (apple) or 2 smaller fruits (apricots), and 1 serve of vegetable equals 1 cup raw (salad), or ½ cup cooked vegetables.

How does this translate into practical help to prevent the over indulgence that many of us repent for on New Years day? By following the following tips in the lead up to Christmas and New Year, you'll be able to enjoy the festivities without falling of the healthy eating wagon:

- Look for healthier options in your restaurant meals when attending office celebrations, for example, choose the vegetable based meals
- Choose meals with vegetable based sauces instead of rich creamy sauces
- Choose side salads instead of herb or garlic breads to accompany a meal
- Choose steamed vegetables instead of chips
- If you are eating with friends offer to bring an interesting salad or crudités of vegetable sticks and vegetable based dips (tomato salsa)
- Choose small servings of lean meats and bulk up your meal with lashings of your favourite vegetables
- Consider a vegetarian meal 1 or 2 days a week, lentils, beans & chick peas are inexpensive and a great source of protein and fibre (Australians often don't eat enough fibre each day)
- Choose fruit based desserts at restaurants, or take a fantastic fruit salad or summer pudding to enjoy with friends when sharing lunch or dinner at each other's homes
- Include small amounts of your favourite treat foods on special occasions, the trick here is to allot yourself a small portion, put the rest back in it's storage container, and savour each morsel
- Drink plenty of water, especially in between alcoholic drinks (alcohol is dehydrating), aim for at least 1.5 – 2 L per day, particularly in hot weather
- Take time to go for a daily walk with a friend, aim for at least 30 minutes each day
- Take time to reflect on the year that was, and look forward by to the new opportunities the new year might bring.

Get up, get moving, get involved, get informed, get healthier! Have a great festive season, and may you spend it with family and friends!