



eat, drink, and be healthy!

It's a magical time of year...meals in front of the fire with family, dining out with friends, holiday parties galore! All of the festivities can cause anxiety; after all, how can you indulge and have a guilt-free time without derailing your healthy habits? Not to fear, even the fittest can imbibe without sacrificing a year's worth of hard work. Here are some great strategies to overcome the angst so you can go ahead and celebrate!

DINING OUT

• Set the tone.

Begin your meal with a nice, warm broth-based soup. Look for those that include plenty of vegetables. Soup is a great low-cal, nutritious way to take the edge off to help you consume fewer calories at the main course.

• Downsize.

Try an appetizer portion of your favorite entrée. In most restaurants, this actually represents the proper portion size! Still watch out for heavy sauces and fried items.

• Be choosy.

Instead of an alcoholic beverage, appetizer, bread, and dessert, select only one.

• Split an entrée with a friend.

It's best to stick to a lean protein, vegetable and substitute a starchy side like mashed potatoes for an extra veggie.

• Beware of preparation methods.

Chefs often use added oil and butter to enhance flavor. So, don't be shy - ask for your dish to be

prepared without added fats. Seemingly healthy dishes such as sautéed eggplant can actually be a diet saboteur, since some vegetables (leafy greens and mushrooms included) soak up extra oils, thus piling on the fat calories. Ask for olive oil on the side and drizzle sparingly on dry vegetables. As a rule of thumb, order steamed when available instead of sautéed to avoid unwanted grease.

COCKTAIL PARTIES

• When hosting, try lightly salted edamame instead of chips or pretzels. Set out crudités with hummus and sliced fruit with Greek yogurt for dipping.

• When perusing the buffet table, stick to anti-pastas, vegetables, lean protein. Beware of pasta dishes (usually very saucy), casseroles, fried or beaded items. Yes, it may be on a cocktail sized plate, but a spoon or two of a few of these sides can quickly pile on the fat and calories more than that chocolate cake.

• Alcohol can derail many efforts as well. Drinking too much can weaken your resolve by lowering inhibitions and stimulating appetites because it lowers blood sugar levels. Drinks can quickly become desserts in disguise, especially the sugary cocktails that are popular this time of year. It is always best to stick with soda or regular tap water as mixers, with a twist of lemon or lime in place of soft drinks or juices. Infused vodkas can also give that extra splash of flavor without a lot of added calories.

MORE WAYS TO CUT BACK ON LIQUID CALORIES

Trade in that egg nog (230 calories and 12 grams of fat per half cup) for the light version (108 calories and 1.2 grams of fat) and you will save 122 calories and 11grams of fat. If you add in 1oz rum, that will add another 50 calories.

Remember.... 5 ounces wine or champagne, 1.5 ounces hard liquor, 12 ounces light beer will all cost you about 100 calories each, so pick your poison. The light beer may be more satisfying for 12oz. Also, choosing a wine spritzer will save about half the calories. It is always a good idea to alternate alcoholic beverages with water or sparkling water to hydrate. Your head will thank you in the morning!

Bottom line: the holidays give people countless reasons to overindulge, but remember your stomachs usually can hold way more than you need. So listen to your body and stop when you are satisfied, not stuffed. As always, choose one indulgence... not all of them. If you suddenly find yourself on the dark side, don't beat yourself up. Next meal, get back on track and possibly do a few extra miles on the treadmill!

For more info, contact Elesha Kelleher, RD, LDN, MPH at (504)842-6096.