

# Eating Healthier over the Holidays

By: Lisa Franzen-Castle, RD, PhD, Nutrition Specialist

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Author E-mail: [lfranz2@unl.edu](mailto:lfranz2@unl.edu)



If holiday eating leaves you worried about foods high in fat and calories or overeating in general, here are some tips to help enjoy the holidays without increasing your waistline. Making recipes healthier may be easier than you think. Make simple ingredient substitutions or adjustments to create healthier recipes without forfeiting flavor and enjoyment. Many traditional foods served during the holidays start out healthy. It's what is added to them and how they are prepared that add extra calories and fat.



## Healthier Holiday Eating Tips:

**Lower the fat.** Use half the butter, shortening or oil in baked goods and replace the other half with unsweetened applesauce, prune puree, or mashed



banana. If the recipe calls for regular sour cream or mayonnaise, replace them with reduced-fat versions. For dip recipes, try using plain, low-fat or non-fat yogurt in place of mayonnaise. Skim excess fat

from the top of soups, gravies and stews. Use skim or low-fat milk instead of whole milk. Choose lean meats, and drain excess fat after cooking.

**Reduce sugar.** In baked goods, such as quick breads, cookies, pie fillings, custard, puddings and fruit crisps, reduce the sugar by one-fourth to one-



third. When you use less sugar in recipes, add spices such as cinnamon, cloves, allspice and nutmeg or flavorings such as vanilla

extract or almond flavoring to enhance the sweetness of the food. Don't reduce sugar in yeast breads because it provides food for the yeast and promotes rising.



**Be sodium savvy.** Drain liquid from canned vegetables and rinse with water. In many recipes, salt may be reduced or deleted altogether. Choose fresh or low-sodium versions of products such as low-sodium soups, broths, soy sauce, canned vegetables and tomato products. When the recipe calls for seasoning salt, such as garlic salt, celery salt, or onion salt, try using herb-only seasoning, such as garlic powder, celery seed, or onion flakes. Or use finely chopped herbs, garlic, celery, or onions. Don't cut salt out of yeast breads because it helps control the rising action of yeast.



**Increase fiber.** Try using whole-wheat flour and bread, bulgur, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, whole cornmeal or barley in recipes and dishes. Substitute whole-wheat flour for half of the all-purpose flour in a recipe. Vegetables are another great way to increase the fiber of dishes, add a variety of vitamins and minerals, and make meals stretch further. Add vegetables to chili, meatloaf, hamburgers and spaghetti sauce. Add extra vegetables to quiche fillings, casseroles and salads. Beans such as kidney, pinto or navy beans are great for soups or stews. Fruits can be added to muffins, pancakes, desserts, and salads.



**Use healthier cooking techniques.** Try using nonstick pans or spraying pans with nonstick cooking spray to reduce the amount of fat and calories added to baked goods. Choose healthier cooking methods that use less fat, such as baking, broiling, grilling, poaching, steaming or microwaving.



Start a tradition this holiday season by getting creative and making your holiday recipes healthier through simple substitutions and adjustments. For



more food, nutrition and health information go to [www.food.unl.edu](http://www.food.unl.edu) or scan the QR code with your smart phone or other electronic device to go directly to the website.

## Healthier Holiday Recipe Ideas!

TURKEY OR CHICKEN SOUP (*Yield: 2 servings*)

- **Ingredients:** 1 cup chopped, cooked turkey or chicken, dash of pepper, 1/4 chopped onion, 1/4 cup chopped celery, 2 thinly chopped carrots, 1/4 teaspoon thyme, 2 cups low sodium chicken broth, 1 cup cooked pasta (such as bowtie, shells, macaroni, etc.) OR 1 cup cooked rice.
- **Directions:** Add all ingredients, except pasta or rice to pan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cook covered until vegetables are tender crisp, about 10 to 15 minutes. Add cooked pasta or cooked rice and cook a few more minutes until pasta or rice is heated.
- **Source:** <http://food.unl.edu/seven-simple-soups-and-stews#turky-chicken>

CHUNKY CRANBERRY SPREAD (*16 servings, 1 tablespoon each*)

- **Ingredients:** 1 8-oz. package low-fat cream cheese, 1-2 tablespoons low-fat milk, 1/2 cup chopped dried cranberries, 1/4 cup chopped blanched almonds or other nut, 1/2 teaspoon orange zest, preferably fresh.
- **Directions:** Place cream cheese in a medium bowl and allow to soften at room temperature. Mash and work with a fork until texture is light enough to combine easily with other ingredients. Gradually add just enough milk so cheese becomes soft and easy to spread. Mix in remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate up to 2 days ahead. Flavors will blend and mellow if this recipe is made ahead of time and allowed to refrigerate at least a few hours before serving. Spread on slices of a whole-grain bread.
- **Source and additional recipe tips:** <http://food.unl.edu/chunky-cranberry-spread>

## Additional Resources & Links:

***Helpful Winter Holiday Food Preparation, Food Safety & Healthy Eating Links.*** Need an ingredient substitution, an answer to a baking or other food preparation question? Healthy food ideas for the holidays? Help can be just a click away.

<http://food.unl.edu/helpful-winter-holiday-food-preparation-safety-healthy-eating>

***Tiny Tastes Can Total BIG Calories over the Winter Holidays.*** Extra calories can sneak in over the holidays. They don't always come in large portions, but can tiptoe in through tiny tastes.

<http://food.unl.edu/tiny-tastes-total-big-calories-over-winter-holidays-powerpoint>

***Turkey Anytime: Recipes for Turning Leftovers into Planned-Overs.*** Turkey makes a great first meal plus delicious leftovers that are easy to combine into a variety of scrumptious future meals.

<http://food.unl.edu/thanksgiving-food-preparation-and-food-safetytips#10>

***Nebraska Extension Calendar*** – National Food Days, Weeks, and Months for November.

<http://food.unl.edu/november-food-calendar>

## Sources:

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3. American Heart Association. (2016). Holiday Healthy Eating Guide. Accessed at: [http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm\\_455757.pdf](http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm_455757.pdf)
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