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Special occasions

Balancing Food and Fun

This module focuses on strategies for managing your weight during holidays and other special occasions.

Plan To Succeed

The old adage, "Failing to plan is planning to fail" is certainly true of weight management. Begin your special occasion weight management plan by thinking about how you handled similar circumstances in the past. Which foods or situations posed the biggest challenge? Begin your plan for coping with these obstacles.

Once you receive or extend an invitation, your plan can become more specific. Think ahead to the circumstances you will encounter. What foods are likely to be served? What will be the most difficult food items for you to deal with? What are the social expectations? What non-food activities will be available or can you plan? Who will support you in the decisions you make?

By recognizing ahead of time what situations you will encounter and the coping strategies you can use, you can plan how you will deal with each challenge.

Set Realistic Goals

Your definition of success during special occasions may be different than the one you use for everyday eating. Set goals for special occasions that allow for occasional splurges balanced with healthy choices. You can attend gatherings, eat, enjoy yourself, and still keep your goals intact.

tools for success

- Recognize that holidays and special occasions require re-evaluation of short-term goals.
- Identify tools you will use during festive times to meet your goals.
- Develop a support system for special occasions or holidays.
- Learn how to modify holiday recipes.
- For additional information on making healthy food choices visit:
www.nestlenutritionstore.com
www.eatingwell.com
www.cookinglight.com

www.OPTIFAST.com

- Instead of planning to lose weight, aim not to gain weight.
- Never vow “not to eat.” You may succeed for a short time in your vow, but you may also feel greatly deprived, and then over-indulge later. And, if you lapse and over-eat, the feelings of failure will increase the risk of abandoning your weight management program all together.
- Spend your calories wisely. Eat small amounts of favorite special occasion treats and pass up foods you can have anytime of the year.

Limit Expectations

If you are the guest:

- Take control of your schedule by setting time limits at food-centered events.
- Don't arrive famished. You are more likely to overeat if you do. Consume a serving of OPTIFAST® product, or a light food option before the event to take the edge off your hunger.
- Alcohol adds unnecessary calories and weakens your resolve. Work to limit your alcohol intake. Drink diet soda, club soda, or mineral water with a twist of lemon or lime. A wine spritzer or a 'lite' beer are your best choices if you want to have an alcoholic beverage. If you do drink alcoholic beverages, alternate them with non-caloric ones.
- Stand on the other side of the room from the food and beverage tables.
- Bring a healthy treat to share; you'll know you have at least one dish you can eat and enjoy without concern.
- Choose small servings of your favorite party foods on a plate before eating. This helps you better judge the total amount you will consume.
- Drink a large glass of water before eating to fill up and help you eat less.
- Eat raw vegetables and fruits for their nutrition but also for their bulk, making you feel more full.

- When you eat slowly, you eat less. As many as twenty minutes can pass between the first bite and the time your brain receives the message you are satisfied. The enjoyment of the food is only experienced while food is in the mouth, so the longer you can keep each bite in your mouth, the more you will enjoy it. Pay attention to smell, appearance, and texture, as well as taste, and try to be the slowest eater at the party or event!

If you are the host:

- Reduce your cooking time and your exposure to tempting ingredients. Have your event catered, or consider ordering a complete holiday meal from the deli of your local gourmet or grocery store. You can let them know your needs; ask for lots of fresh foods with light seasonings, and low-fat and low-sugar menu options.
- Share cooking responsibilities: go 'potluck!' Ask your guests to prepare the dishes with a healthy theme and send leftovers home with your guests.
- Consider reducing eating time by shortening the hors d'oeuvres hour. After dessert has been served, encourage your guests to retire to another room with coffee while you clear away the plates (and the remaining servings of dessert!)
- After the party, send your leftovers home with your guests. Have someone else put away the food items you're keeping while you clean up other areas. Freeze leftovers or place in opaque containers.
- Encourage non-food holiday traditions such as caroling, games, afternoon strolls, trimming the tree, and volunteering for community services. Learn to enjoy “active” fun activities like dancing, sledding, skiing, skating, or hiking. Whether you are the guest or the host, work to focus on people and de-emphasize the importance of eating. Enjoy the pleasure of being together!

What other eating tips can you think of from your own experience?

Healthy Recipes

Pumpkin pie is a mantelpiece of the traditional holiday gathering, pleasing old and young alike.

Gingered Pumpkin Pie

- 20 gingersnap cookies
- 1 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsps chilled butter, cut into small pieces
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1-1/2 tsps ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 (15-oz) can unsweetened pumpkin (or 2 cups fresh mashed pumpkin)
- 1 (12-oz) can evaporated fat-free milk
- 1 large egg
- 3 large egg whites

1. Preheat oven to 350°.

2. Whir 10 ginger cookies in a food processor. Remove and reserve to dust pie plate. Place another 10 cookies, 1 tbsp sugar, and flour in the food processor; process until cookies are ground. Add butter; pulse until crumbly. Reserve for topping.

3. Combine sugars and remaining ingredients. If using fresh pumpkin, you will get a smoother texture if you process mixture with a handheld mixing wand, mixer, or put it in the blender. Spray 9" pie pan with cooking spray. Dust with the reserved 10 crushed gingersnap cookies. Pour pumpkin mixture into the prepared pie pan. Bake at 350° for 35 minutes. Sprinkle reserved crumb mixture over pie; bake an additional 20 minutes or until center is set. Cool to room temperature on a wire rack.

Makes 8 servings (serving size: 1 wedge)

Adapted from Cooking Light

A sweet combination balanced with crisp fruits and nuts.

Apple and Orange Salad with Cashews

- 3/4 cup low-fat plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1-1/2 tbsp honey
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 3 apples, cut into 1/2" chunks
- 1 large orange, separated into segments
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 1/3 cup golden raisins
- 3 tbsps coarsely chopped cashews

In a large bowl, combine the yogurt, orange juice, honey, and cinnamon. Add the apples, orange segments, celery, raisins, and cashews. Stir to mix.

Makes 6 servings

Healthy Recipes cont.

Soups are not only holiday favorites, but fall and winter, and hors d'oeuvre, must-haves.

Roasted Pear-Butternut Soup

- 2 ripe pears, peeled, quartered and cored
 - 2 lbs butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 2" chunks
 - 2 medium tomatoes, cored and quartered
 - 1 large leek, pale green and white parts only, halved lengthwise, sliced and washed thoroughly
 - 2 cloves garlic, crushed
 - 2 tbsps extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1/2 tsp salt, divided
 - Freshly ground pepper to taste
 - 4-5 cups vegetable broth or reduced-sodium chicken broth, divided
 - 1 tbsp thinly sliced fresh chives or scallion greens
1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
 2. Combine pears, squash, tomatoes, leek, garlic, oil, 1/4 tsp salt and pepper in a large bowl; toss to coat. Spread evenly on a large rimmed baking sheet. Roast, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, 40 to 55 minutes. Let cool slightly.
 3. Place half the vegetables and 2 cups broth in a blender; puree until smooth. Transfer to a large saucepan. Puree the remaining vegetables and 2 cups broth. Add to the pan and stir in the remaining 1/4 tsp salt. If the soup is too thick, add additional broth to reach desired consistency.
 4. Cook the soup over medium-low heat, stirring, until hot, about 10 minutes. Divide among 6 bowls and garnish with chives (or scallion greens). Tip: You may cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month. Add more broth when reheating, if desired.

Makes 6 servings. Adapted from www.eatingwell.com

Poaching involves gently simmering ingredients in water or a flavorful liquid such as broth, vinegar or juice until they're cooked through and tender. In this recipe, pears are simmered in orange and apple juice. The pears retain their shape, making this an elegant complement to any meal.

Poached Pears

- 1 cup orange juice (fresh is preferred)
 - 1/4 cup apple juice
 - 1 tsp ground cinnamon
 - 1/2 tsp fresh ground nutmeg
 - 4 whole pears
 - 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
 - 1/2 cup fresh raspberries
 - 2 tbsps orange zest
1. In a small bowl, combine the juices, cinnamon and nutmeg. Stir to mix evenly.
 2. Peel the pears and leave the stems. Remove the core from the bottom of the pear. Place in a shallow pan. Add the juice mixture to the pan and set over medium heat. Simmer for about 30 minutes, turning pears frequently. Don't boil.
 3. Remove from heat and stir in the vanilla extract. Transfer the pears to individual serving plates. Garnish with raspberries and orange zest and serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings. Adapted from www.mayoclinic.com

Healthy Recipes cont.

What makes a holiday but the green bean casserole. Try this tasty re-make of the classic side-dish.

Green Bean Casserole

Onion topping

- 1/2 tsp canola oil
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup fresh breadcrumbs

Sauce & green beans

- 2 cups skim milk
- 6 black peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- Pinch grated nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp canola oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 lb mushrooms, trimmed and sliced
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1 9-oz package frozen green beans (or 1/2 lb fresh beans, washed and trimmed)

1. To make onion topping: Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet over low heat. Add sliced onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until very tender and golden, about 30 minutes. Set aside.

2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spread breadcrumbs on a baking sheet and toast, stirring once, until lightly browned, 5 to 10 minutes. Set aside.

3. To make sauce: Combine milk, peppercorns, bay leaf and nutmeg in a medium saucepan and heat over low until steaming. Remove from heat, let stand for 5 minutes and strain into a measuring cup. (Discard peppercorns and bay leaf.)

4. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add chopped onion and cook, stirring often, until golden, 3 to 4 minutes. Add mushrooms and garlic and cook, stirring, until tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Sprinkle flour over the vegetables and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Slowly pour in the milk, whisking constantly. Bring to a boil, stirring. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring, until thickened, about 1 minute. Remove from heat. Whisk in sour cream, salt and pepper.

5. To assemble and bake casserole: Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Spread green beans evenly over the bottom of a shallow 2-quart baking dish and pour the sauce over the top. Toss together the reserved onions and breadcrumbs in a small bowl and spread over the beans. Bake until bubbling, 15 to 25 minutes.

Adapted from www.eatingwell.com

Instead of mashed potatoes, try this surprisingly delicious alternative made with cauliflower!

Mashed Cauliflower

- 4 cups cauliflower florets
- 2 tbsp soft tub margarine
- 2-3 tbsp fat-free half-and-half
- Pinch salt
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper

Steam or microwave the cauliflower until soft. Puree in a food processor, adding the margarine and the half-and-half to taste. Season with salt and pepper.

Makes 4 servings.

Healthy Recipes cont.

Even muffins get spruced up for the holidays, with many guests inevitably traveling.

Carrot-Sweet Potato Muffins

- 2 cups all-purpose unbleached flour + 3/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice
- 1-1/4 cups coarsely shredded carrot
- 3/4 cup skim milk
- 1/2 cup low-fat buttermilk
- 1/3 cup light ricotta cheese (or low fat cottage cheese)
- 1/2 cup mashed cooked sweet potato
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- 1 large egg white + 1 large egg

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Combine first 8 ingredients in a large bowl. Stir in carrot; make a well in center of mixture. Combine milk and next 7 ingredients (milk through egg); stir well with a whisk. Add to flour mixture, stirring just until moist. Spoon batter into 18 muffin cups coated with cooking spray or paper cupcake liners.
3. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes or until done. Remove from pans immediately, and cool on a wire rack.

Makes 18 muffins. Adapted from Cooking Light

Another way to dress up a meal is with festive color and contrast, not to mention great taste.

Strawberry Salad with poppy seed dressing

- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 10 cup romaine lettuce, torn into bite sized pieces
- 1 pint strawberries, hulled and sliced

Dressing:

- 2 packets of Splenda
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 tbsp poppy seeds
- 2 tbsp cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup low-fat mayonnaise
- 1/3 cup plain yogurt

1. Place sliced red onion in ice water for 30 minutes (this takes the "bite" out of the onion). Drain well.
 2. Place lettuce, onion, and strawberries in a large bowl.
 3. Combine dressing ingredients. Taste and add additional Splenda if preferred.
 4. Toss salad with dressing and serve immediately
- Makes 8 servings.

Stress and The Holidays

The holidays can be a tough time: family obligations, work needs, schedule changes, and lots and lots of food can be a real challenge for anyone. Here are some tips to take good care of yourself during the holiday seasons:

- In spite of the stress of a packed calendar, set time aside for yourself for exercising, or perhaps yoga, a massage, whatever makes you more relaxed and in tune with yourself. Make a date to be active with a friend or family member.
- Ask friends and family to avoid offering you tempting treats. Be gently assertive when someone is offering you food. Remember that you, and only you, can know how much and which foods are right for you.
- Discuss your need for support with family and friends. Give them clear examples of what you will need, and when.
- Spend less. Ask family and friends to consider a fun group gift function instead of individual gifts. Others are often as pressed for time and dollars as you are and would welcome a change of routine.
- If you eat more than you planned, maintain a positive attitude! It doesn't mean you've lost all ability to manage your food intake. One setback does not ruin the days or weeks of progress you have made. What happens after the setback is more important than the setback itself. Analyze the factors that triggered your setback and make a plan for a healthier choice for tomorrow and the days to come. Start the next hour, or day fresh with a renewed commitment to your health plan. A realistic, positive attitude is very important in helping you control special event eating!
- Establish a non-food reward system for yourself. Use rewards such as a small purchase you have been putting off, a massage, or a warm relaxing bath, to celebrate each success you achieve.
- Maintain close contact with your OPTIFAST Program staff. It may be helpful to attend a group

session or talk to your Program dietitian from time to time to brainstorm potential solutions to problems you've encountered.

- Maintain close contact with others who share your weight control goals. Have a list of friends to call on for support during the holiday seasons.

Minimizing Main Dish Calories

- Season entrees with herbs, spices and broths. Skip the sauces, gravies, and butter toppings, use low-fat or non-fat sour cream in small amounts.
- You can make a low-fat gravy in your own kitchen by pouring the meat drippings from your holiday roast into a container and then putting the container into the freezer—or adding ice cubes—to chill quickly. Use a large spoon to skim off the solid fat that forms at the top or use a gravy skimmer with a spout for separating fat from meat juices. Add small amounts of flour or cornstarch to thicken the gravy, and skim milk, water, or vegetable stock for thinning, while reheating the defatted drippings.
- In recipes calling for sour cream, such as stroganoff, substitute plain yogurt with one tablespoon of flour added for each cup of yogurt.
- Plan one low-calorie dish for each meal. Strive for maximum chewing satisfaction with the fewest calories, e.g., broccoli, cauliflower, etc.

Side-dish Strategies

Pairing a favorite family entree with light side dishes is a smart way to keep the holiday food favorites you look forward to without overloading on calories.

- Don't hide your vegetables under fat-filled cheese, butter, or cream sauces. Try a colorful blend of baby vegetables steamed in chicken broth, or replace butter sauce with butter-flavored sprinkles.
- Mashed potatoes are a staple of many holiday meals; use 1% milk or defatted chicken broth for a lower-calorie version.