

Christmas

At Christmas we're often surrounded by masses of delicious food and drink. While there is no reason to feel guilty about enjoying yourself, it's worth remembering that, on average, people gain from 1-5lbs (1-2.5kg) over this holiday period. But don't despair, you can enjoy yourself and make healthier choices too.

Did you know that many people eat their way through about 6,000 calories on Christmas Day? That's about three times as much as we need. So, think about your portion sizes and follow these simple tips to help you eat, drink and be healthy.

Start the day with a healthy breakfast

Try breakfast cereals, porridge, wholegrain bread/rolls, English muffins, scones, malt loaf, fruit bread and bagels which are all good sources of energy to help get you through a busy morning and they're all low in fat too. Choose wholegrain varieties whenever possible to ensure a good fibre intake to keep you feeling full, so you are less likely to snack throughout the morning.

Adding fruit will boost your 5-a-day target, why not try seasonal citrus fruit like satsumas and clementines, or stewed or baked apples with fresh/dried dates, figs or cranberries. You could add a small 150ml glass of fruit juice or a fresh fruit smoothie. Vegetables such as mushrooms or grilled tomatoes are tasty on toast or in an omelette and baked beans also count as one of your 5-a-day! Fruit and veg are a great source of both vitamins and fibre.

Low-fat yoghurt or milk (or non-dairy alternatives fortified with calcium e.g. soya or coconut milk) on cereal, to make porridge or added to a smoothie will give you calcium for strong teeth and bones.

Christmas meal

Starters Try smoked salmon, which is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, needed to keep your heart healthy; melon or vegetable soup a further boost to your 5-a-day target.



Main course

Turkey is low in fat and high in protein (to help your body grow and repair) so enjoy it. Most of the fat that is present in a cooked turkey will be found just under/in the skin. Why not take the skin off before you tuck in? A side of salmon is also a great alternative to meat. If you are a vegetarian try a roasted vegetable medley with added nuts, seeds, beans or pulses for protein.

All the trimmings:

Roast potatoes Use unsaturated vegetable oil like rapeseed or sunflower oil rather than goose fat or lard; try using a spray or brush which spreads less fat further and roast on a non-stick tray/foil. Cut the potatoes into large chunks, as these absorb less fat than smaller ones.

Fill up on vegetables

Aim to cover at least a third of your dinner plate with a variety of vegetables, such as unbuttered Brussels sprouts, peas and carrots which are all rich sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre to help protect against heart disease and cancer. Cook for the shortest length of time possible in the smallest amount of

water necessary, steam or microwave to keep all the nutrients in. As long as they are not covered in butter or any other fatty spreads, all vegetables are low in calories and fat and contribute to your 5-a-day.



Gravy, stuffing and sauces Use a chestnut and/or fruit-based stuffing and make bread sauce with low-fat milk. When making gravy why not use the water from your cooked vegetables? If using meat juices, let the fat rise to the surface, then skim it off and use what's left behind.

Pigs in blankets If you can't resist these, grill or roast alongside your meat instead of frying so you can throw away the extra fat.

Dessert

Christmas pudding is packed with fruit and quite low in fat, so to keep it this way, serve with low-fat custard or crème fraiche. You could also prepare a fresh fruit salad and serve with natural yoghurt. Homemade mince-tarts with filo pastry are just as tasty as mince pies with less pastry, so less fat!

Cheese and crackers

Cheese is creamy so you won't need butter and a stronger cheese means you can go for a smaller portion. Lower-fat options include Edam, goats cheese, camembert or Danish blue. Choose wholegrain crackers or oatcakes.

Leftovers

Turkey or salmon sandwiches on wholemeal bread with a low-fat spread or spicy chutney and plenty of salad are a delicious, filling and healthy lunch or supper. Leftover vegetables can be made into soup or mixed together and turned into a traditional bubble and squeak – mash or chop the veg, adding onion, garlic and herbs if you like, with a spray of olive or sunflower oil in a non-stick pan, press down and then flip over once crispy and brown to cook the other side. Serve alone or with leftover cold meat or salmon.

It's usually all the little extras that pile on the calories...

Alcohol

Remember, drinks have calories too. Why not alternate your alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic ones (remember if you are having fizzy drinks choose sugar free or diet varieties), or even better, offer to drive and don't drink alcohol. Try sparkling water with a few slices of seasonal fruit, or warm through some unsweetened apple juice with spices for a non-alcoholic warm drink. Always have a jug of water on the table at mealtimes.

Snacks

With all the tasty snacks around at Christmas it's easy to over-indulge. So if you can, keep tempting treats out of sight and make sure you have healthy options to hand:

- satsumas are a great source of vitamin C and look festive, so keep a large bowl of these and other fruit handy
- chestnuts are the only low fat nuts around, so roast a few and leave the salted peanuts to one side
- choose a handful of unsalted nuts, plain popcorn or pretzels or raw veg and low fat dips
- dried fruit makes a tasty snack – dates, figs and apricots are all good choices.

Above all enjoy yourself!

Don't forget that being active will help you work off those extra calories. Why not dance the night away at all those office parties and on Christmas day, wrap up warm and go for a walk after lunch.

Summary

Christmas is a wonderful time to eat, drink and be merry - following the tips in this Food Fact Sheet will help you have a good time without overindulging. After your main meal, go for a brisk walk to burn off the extra treats you couldn't resist.

Further information: Food Fact Sheets on other topics including Healthy Eating, Sport and Fruit and Veg - how to get five a day, are available at www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts



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