

## Health is Wealth: Don't Go Broke This Holiday Season

By Nicolle Cucco

There's no time quite like the holidays; family & friends all around, holiday shopping and especially all the food! But to avoid the 'holiday guilt,' many people aren't sure what or how they should eat. Let alone what to do when Grandma's triple-chocolate chip cookies or Aunt Theresa's baked ziti always seem to be within arm's reach.

Whether you're looking to get a head start on your New Year's resolution or just trying to maintain your figure, all the delicious treats may be a bit overwhelming. But, with the average weight gain for American's being only about 1-2 lbs. from November-January, (Schoeller, 2014; Yanovski et al., 2000), there's no need to have an "all or nothing" approach to your diet! This kind of thinking can lead to being too hard on yourself and a negative relationship with food.

"Eat what you love- in moderation," says Jody Engel, a dietitian for the National Institute of Health (2016). This is especially true with seasonal produce! December is the time for winter squashes, sweet potatoes, grapefruit, pomegranates, tangerines, parsnips and Brussel sprouts. Try including these fruits and veggies not only for added fiber and cold-fighting vitamins + minerals, but also because when produce is in season it's often cheaper and better tasting.

Staying active throughout the November-January stretch is important. Try to stick with your workout routine if you have one, or incorporate some new ways to add in a little extra physical activity. Park farther away when doing your holiday shopping or take the stairs instead of elevators/escalators. Exercise is also beneficial for your immune system and decreasing stress levels. So, if you're feeling under the weather or just sick of the holiday chaos, try going for a walk outside or to the gym (Radak, 2008).

Another important way to keep healthy this holiday season is to stay hydrated. Simple as it may seem, dehydration can be common even in the winter. Signs of dehydration include dizziness, fatigue, confusion, dry skin and sunken eyes. Avoid these by keeping a big water bottle with you when holiday shopping or sight-seeing. Make sure to always have a glass of water with you at events, especially if you'll be drinking alcohol.

Be on the look-out for hidden calories found in cocktails, juices and soda that come along with the holiday fun. Keep track of how many you've had and try switching up your regular mixers with better (and still delicious) options like flavored seltzer water or fresh fruit juice. Another option is to muddle fruit in the bottom of a glass with a small amount of honey, then add ice and your choice of beverage for a naturally sweet drink.

Last, but certainly not least, don't forget to show your gut some love this holiday season! With all the festivities and get-togethers, you may not be eating foods you normally have in your diet. Enjoy all of it without feelings of bloating or discomfort by incorporating fermented foods like yogurt, kombucha and pickled vegetables. They will keep your good gut bacteria happy and your holiday season pain-free! Try a homemade yogurt bowl (like to the one pictured below) by layering low-fat plain yogurt, seasonal fruit, nut butter, & chia seeds for a yummy snack or breakfast to keep your mind and body content during the holiday chaos!



Use #IAmWellAndGood to find more inspiration or share your holiday health hacks!

## Sources

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