

Holiday Eating Tips From MyPlate

The crazy rush of the holiday season may disrupt your regular meal and exercise patterns. The good news is that you can eat healthfully and lower in calories by filling half your holiday plate with fruits and vegetables. Most people need to consume 4-5 cups of fruits and vegetables every day.

Remember these messages from MyPlate whether you're eating at home, the office party, a restaurant, a food court, or picking up a meal at a drive through window.

Fill Appetizer Plates Half Way With Vegetables

A plate with 1 cup of carrots and celery and 2 mini quiches contains only 145 calories while a more typical plate with 4 mini quiches, 2 slices of cheddar cheese and 5 crackers contains 546 calories.

Choose red, orange, and dark-green vegetables like tomatoes, carrots and broccoli, along with assorted other vegetables. Good appetizers include Melba toast topped with sun-dried tomatoes and a thin slice of part-skim mozzarella cheese, hummus or tomato bruschetta spread on cucumber slices, and mushrooms marinated in a low-fat vinaigrette.

Fill Dessert Plates at Least Half Way With Fruit

When dining out, eat sliced fruit from the salad bar as your dessert to avoid baked desserts that are high in calories. Or, fill your dessert plate with fruit and leave room for a thin slice of your favorite pie, a small piece of cake or a cookie. A cup of fresh fruit and a small cookie or half a slice of pie has about 290 calories, but a plate with a peppermint brownie, a slice of pecan pie and a butter cookie contains a whopping 900 calories.

When shopping, take an apple to munch on if you get hungry. This will keep you from being tempted by the aroma of pretzels and cookies in the food court. Before you eat a snack from the mall, visualize what it looks like on a regular dinner plate. If it takes up the whole plate, then it is too large. Super-sized snack items like large pretzels, cookies and cinnamon rolls are so common that we have become oblivious to their large size.

Eat a Healthy Snack Plate With Fruits & Vegetables Before Going to a Party

Eat your fruits and vegetables before you go out, because it is not always easy to eat healthfully at the office party or your friend's house. By eating a small salad and a piece of fruit beforehand, you won't arrive starved and tempted to fill up on fried chicken tenders or fatty roast beef.

If you need to take a dish to a party and are pressed for time, pick up a pre-assembled fruit and vegetable tray from the supermarket.

Make a Healthy Plate for Lunch & Dinner

Use a smaller plate at meals to lower calories. You can finish your entire plate and feel satisfied without overeating. This is MyPlate's method of portion control.

Vegetables provide texture and low-calorie bulk that satisfies. Cook light, tasty vegetable side dishes in one of these 10 healthy ways: bake, roast, boil, steam, blanch, stir-fry, sauté, grill, stew or microwave. For example, stir-fry a mixture of vegetables with olive oil and herbs, or steam some cabbage seasoned with caraway seeds and a sprinkling of salt and pepper.

Looking for a lower-calorie pasta dish? Prepare vegetable lasagna by replacing the meat with eggplant, spinach, broccoli, carrots, mushrooms or your favorite combination. Or, make a 400-calorie pasta dish by filling half your plate with veggies, one-fourth with pasta and one-fourth with meatballs. That contains less than half the calories in a 900-calorie large bowl of traditional pasta with meatballs! Add extra vegetables to your pasta dish by slipping some peppers, spinach, red beans, onions, or cherry tomatoes into your traditional tomato sauce.

When ordering dinner in a restaurant, ask for an extra side of vegetable or side salad instead of the typical fried side dish.

Visit <http://ChooseMyPlate.gov> for a variety of information on MyPlate, which is USDA's new food guide to educate Americans on how to eat healthfully.

Prepared by Janis G. Hunter, HGIC Nutrition Specialist, and Katherine L. Cason, Professor, Department of Food, Nutrition, and Packaging Sciences, Clemson University, 12/11.

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