

# PLATE UP

## a healthier holiday meal



Turkey and trimmings, casseroles and cookies, festive drinks and sweet treats—there’s no denying the holidays’ focus on food. While it might be tradition, this emphasis on eating can slowly sneak up on you.

“The average person usually gains only a pound or two over the holiday season,” says Alicia Buterbaugh, clinical dietitian and certified diabetes educator with Kettering Health. “Which doesn’t sound like much, but that weight is usually maintained after the new year. Over the course of five to 10 years, a few pounds each year can add up.”

Sustained weight gain increases your risk of developing diseases and life-threatening chronic conditions like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. So how do you maintain a healthy weight and still enjoy the season? With mindful meals and healthier alternatives to your holiday favorites. Follow these tips for a more healthy—yet still tasty—holiday table.

**Be mindful at meals**

Common reasons for increased caloric intake during the holidays include eating in response to sight or smell, eating in response to stress, and snacking after dinner. While occasional indulgences are part of a balanced diet, bingeing is not. Before you eat something, ask yourself if you really want it or if you are eating another cookie because the tray is sitting in front of you.

**Break down the basics**

If you’re the cook, you can get creative with the holiday cuisine. “One good place to start is to look at the ingredients in a recipe and see if there are better options you can use,” says Alicia. “You can still follow a traditional recipe for green bean casserole but swap the condensed, canned soup for a lower-fat, lower-sodium version and use skim milk instead of whole milk.”

Consciously considering the ingredients you use and choosing healthier alternatives can make a big difference in the nutrition of a dish.

**Consider method and preparation**

How you cook foods can significantly impact the nutrition of a meal. Instead of deep-frying a turkey, roast it in the oven. Instead of making a two-crust apple pie, use only a bottom crust—or skip the crust altogether. Simple switches can save you calories and time.

**Get creative**

Buck tradition and try something completely different. Instead of stuffing, prepare a pumpkin and wild rice risotto. In lieu of green bean casserole, dish up green beans almonidine. Thinking outside the box can create a beautiful and healthy dish your guests are sure to remember.

**Take baby steps**

Found a recipe for mashed cauliflower you’re eager to try but aren’t sure how it will be received? Try mixing mashed cauliflower with regular mashed potatoes to make the dish healthier yet still familiar. Gradual changes in ingredients, dishes, and meals can lead to healthy holiday swaps that last through the years.

If you do overindulge at a meal, don’t stress over it. Rather, consider why you overate and go back to these strategies at the next meal.

“Remember, the holidays aren’t all about food—they are about spending time with friends and family,” says Alicia. “Try to incorporate some kind of physical activity into the day where you can spend time together, like a group walk through a park while the turkey roasts.”

Traditional holiday dish	Healthier holiday swap
<b>Deep-fried turkey</b> Calories: 603 Sodium: 571mg Fat: 34 grams	<b>Roasted turkey breast</b> Calories: 385 Sodium: 314mg Fat: 12 grams
<b>Green bean casserole</b> Calories: 145 Sodium: 652mg Fat: 9 grams	<b>Green beans almonidine (GF)</b> Calories: 71 Sodium: 38mg Fat: 5 grams
<b>Sausage and bread stuffing</b> Calories: 325 Sodium: 512 mg Fat: 27 grams	<b>Butternut squash and wild rice stuffing (GF)</b> Calories: 277 Sodium: 186mg Fat: 10 grams
<b>Mashed potatoes</b> Calories: 257 Sodium: 76 mg Fat: 7 grams	<b>Cauliflower mashed potatoes</b> Calories: 105 Sodium: 151mg Fat: 6 grams
<b>Apple pie</b> Calories: 382 Sodium: 248mg Fat: 17 grams	<b>No-crust apple pie</b> Calories: 133 Sodium: 164 mg Fat: 3grams
<b>TRADITIONAL MEAL TOTAL</b> Calories: 1,712 Sodium: 2,060 mg Fat: 70 grams	<b>HEALTHIER HOLIDAY TOTAL</b> Calories: 971 Sodium: 853 mg Fat: 36 grams

\*Nutrition amounts based on one serving of each dish.  
GF = Gluten-free