

Your recipe for a healthy, delicious holiday season

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(HealthDay)—The holidays can become one big pig out, but experts say

it's possible to maintain healthy eating habits while you celebrate.

"It's important to not look at holiday events as if they are an all-you-can-eat situation. Listen to your body. Serve yourself smaller portions and only go back for seconds if you are still hungry. Don't plan to eat everything at the table, and instead, only serve yourself your favorites," suggested Jessica Caricato and Jackie Goulet, of Columbia University's Tisch Center for Food, Education and Policy in New York City.

Caricato and Goulet offered more tips:

If you're the host, offering healthy fruit and vegetable dishes is something many of your guests would appreciate. If you're visiting others, take along one of your favorite vegetable dishes for everyone to enjoy. Replacing heavier veggie side dishes with lightly steamed counterparts is something that both your body and your relatives will thank you for, they said in a university news release.

When it comes to starters, consider a crouton-free salad with vinaigrette dressing. Soup is also a good choice, but slim it down: Instead of serving a cream soup, use chicken or vegetable broth, or a puree of vegetables as the base.

Watch your side dishes, too. "Skim the fat off gravies and sauces before serving them. Chill them for a bit, causing the fat to float to the top and solidify. Upgrade cranberry sauce by including chunks of fresh pear," a naturally sweet fruit, Caricato and Goulet said. That way you won't need to add as much sugar to the recipe, they added.

For a healthy dessert, combine one cup of oats, a big spoonful of brown sugar and whole wheat flour, and a healthy pinch of cinnamon to create a crumble to top your favorite pie filling.

Alcoholic beverages have lots of calories. If you drink, do so in moderation and alternate between alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks.

And don't forget to make time for exercise. Not only will it help with weight control, it will also help tame holiday stress.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers tips for a [healthy holiday season](#).

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