

Holiday Parties

Don't Let Your Belly Jiggle like a Bowl Full of Jelly

This time of year is filled with parties – at work, with friends, & with family. It's no wonder with all of these parties why people put on 5 to 20 lbs!

Of course every party has lots of baked goods, sweet & creamy drinks, and alcohol. Nobody wants to be a party pooper and claim "I'm watching my diet" to their friends, family, & co-workers. You'll hear everyone say, "Oh come on! It's Christmas. It's once a year. Enjoy yourself!" We all encounter "pushers" who will try to get you to indulge, if anything to make themselves feel better about the fattening, high calorie foods they are eating. However, if you come armed with some of these healthy holiday party techniques, you can enjoy yourself at the parties, but without looking like the lone health conscious partygoer. It is possible to enjoy the holidays without putting on weight – and hopefully, you'll lose weight!

Always Offer to Bring an Appetizer

If you're at a party and all of the food offered is fattening, high calorie, & full of simple carbs, you'll be tempted to eat it. If anything, you might feel rude not eating the food offered. The way to combat that is to bring your own health-conscious food. That way you can enjoy a lot of the food you bring, while enjoying a little bit of the other food. You can enjoy some of the other treats – just keep it to a minimum. *Moderation is key!*

Some Holiday Appetizer Ideas:

- *Fruit Skewers or Fruit Platter*
Most everyone enjoys fruit, so this will most likely be popular at any party. Just get your favorite fruits and cut them up and put them on skewers (perfect finger food) or place them on a platter. That's it!
- *Tomato-Basil-Mozzarella Skewers*
This appetizer not only tastes good, but it looks good, too. (Plus, it's Christmas colors!) Get some cherry tomatoes, sliced up fresh mozzarella, and fresh basil sprigs. On a skewer start with a tomato, then basil, then mozzarella, then repeat until you reach the end of the skewer. Drizzle some balsamic vinaigrette over the skewers for added flavor.
- *Veggie Platter w/ a Dip*
Put on a platter all of your favorite veggies for dips: carrots, celery, mushrooms, cucumbers, radishes, etc. Serve with it your favorite low calorie dips, such as: low calorie ranch, low calories dill dip, hummus, tahini sauce, or bean dips.
Here's a great bean dip that is easy to make:
Black beans, salsa/pico de gallo, cilantro, and avocado chunks (sprinkle lemon juice on the avocado chunks to keep the bright green color and to give the dip some zing). Mix them all together and serve with veggies &/or multi-grain chips.
- *Unsalted Nuts*
Not as exciting as the salted nuts, but pre-salted nuts are generally more calories and high in sodium. It's important to have low-sodium options, as most holiday food is high in sodium. Nuts can be a great snack, but just make sure you don't snack on them too much. Just a small handful!
- *Popcorn*
Who doesn't love popcorn? Pop them in an air popper (best) or on the stove. Serve with a light dusting of sea salt.

- *Goat Cheese, Whole Grain Crackers, Grapes, Pears*

Make a cheese platter! Who doesn't love cheese? The benefit of goat cheese is that it's lower calorie & fat than other cheeses, and it's generally more pungent, so you don't need as much. Serve it with whole grain crackers, grapes, & pears.

Eat Before the Party

There is nothing worse than showing up to a party on an empty stomach. Inevitably you will go straight to the food table and eat everything you shouldn't. So, to prevent yourself from doing that, make sure you *eat a high fiber, high protein meal 30 minutes/an hour beforehand*. You'll feel full and not be as tempted to eat baked goods, chips, sweets, and all of the other bad-for-you stuff. Also, *drink a few glasses of water before the party*. This is another great trick to fill you up so you don't overindulge.

How to Eat at the Party

As mentioned before, you can enjoy the holiday food, but keep in mind that ***moderation is key***.

1. Bring something healthy to eat that you can fill up on. You can use some of the ideas above, or get creative.
2. Fill your plate with veggies & fruit (whether you brought them or not). Or, stand next to that area of the food table. That way you can still enjoy the food & company and not feel bad later on about the food you ate.
3. *Try to stay away from grains as much as possible*. A little won't kill you but grains aren't your friend. *If you do end up eating grains, go for whole grains*. Also, *aim to eat low fat/low calorie proteins*. Examples: wheat bread, wheat rolls, whole grain chips & crackers, turkey slices, shrimp, and limited cheese intake (a little is OK, don't load up on cheese slices).
Stay away from: white bread, croissants, tortilla chips (the generic brands that are always high in fat & calories), *crackers like Ritz* (buttery glaze on them and not whole grain), *sausages, meat balls, devilled eggs, and dips* (unless you brought the dip and know it's OK ☺).
4. Believe it or not, you can eat some dessert! Just be smart about it. *Limit yourself to two small dessert items* (like two small cookies, brownies, etc) *or one bigger dessert item* (like a piece of cake or pie). That way you don't feel like you're depriving yourself, which could drive you to overeat (some people will subconsciously overindulge if they feel like they are depriving themselves). Setting a limit is a good way to enjoy dessert without eating too much of it that you're packing on the calories.

Alcohol: Drink Responsibly

You can have alcohol at a party; just make wise decisions so you don't pile on the liquid calories.

Aim to have 1 to 2 glasses during a party. Drinking more than two drinks increases your liquid calorie consumption, while also lowering your will to eat in moderation. You don't want to feel so loose that you start to eat & drink more than you planned!

- The best alcoholic beverage to imbibe is wine, red or white. Enjoy a glass and sip on it throughout the party. If you want to make it last longer, try adding some club soda to a white wine to make a spritzer.
- When it comes to beer, light beers are obviously going to be lower calorie and are a better option. Beer will fill you up, so if you decide to enjoy a glass, you might not feel tempted to eat as much.
- When it comes down to hard alcohol, mix them only with diet sodas (including diet tonic water). Mixers, such as juices or regular sodas, are filled with liquid calories. Keep the amount of liquor to 1oz per drink.

-Stay away from liqueurs, which are quite popular this time of year. They are so high calorie and are always mixed with other high calorie liquids. There's a reason why they taste like dessert.
-Champagne is often served at holiday parties. Enjoy no more than 2 flutes if you're celebrating the season.

Drink a glass of water between drinks. This is a great way to fill you up and keep you hydrated.

In general, whether or not the drinks have alcohol, stay away from all punches, ciders, sweet concoctions, or nogs (obviously, hot buttered rum & eggnog are out of the question).

Enjoy this Holiday Season!

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