

# Can you be Fun, Sociably Festive & Healthy at Christmas?

Christmas tends to be a time of pure self-indulgence and most of us justify our actions by celebrating it to the max. After all Christmas comes but once a year, however, healthy eating should be a lifestyle choice for life. Sounds boring already... I hear you cry.

It is important to accept that you may slide a little over Christmas and New Year but come 1st January you have the chance to get back on track and start a fresh for the New Year ahead. Don't beat yourself up about the past and draw a line under it and move on.

During the festive season there will be many occasions from family gatherings to office parties which will divert your attention from "being good". Unfortunately, eating with friends can tempt us to overeat and drink. Meals with multiple courses eaten over longer periods and with alcohol are all associated with overindulgence. Endless canapé trays at the office party are also laden with foods containing high saturated fat.

Eating out usually means that we have little control over how the food is prepared or how large the portion is. Also, foods eaten out tend to be higher in fat and research has shown that those who eat out regularly generally have higher intakes of fat, salt and calories.

As you have no point of nutritional reference with foods bought from cafes and restaurants there is no way of knowing exactly what is contained in that food and opting for the healthiest option might not always be obvious, or easy. However, with some knowledge and thought, eating out can be enjoyable and healthy!

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**THE TEN STEPS TO ENJOYING THE FESTIVE SEASON WITHOUT BLOWING THE WHOLE DIET:**

1. If you are going out to a drinks or cocktail party, eat something substantial and healthy before you go, this will reduce the chance of gorging on canapés or finger food at the party.
2. Always ask the waitress if you do not know what is in the food being served. If they don't know the chef certainly will.
3. Don't be polite when it comes to pudding. Opt for a hot mint tea to be sociable but not calorific. Or, if on the menu a small fruit sorbet or fruit dish. Avoid dairy based desserts that contain fat.
4. Think about sharing a course with a companion if the portions look large.
5. Don't be afraid to be high maintenance like Meg Ryan in "When Harry met Sally". Losing weight can be high maintenance to start with whilst you are getting your bearings so by asking your waitress to hold the mayonnaise or put the dressing on the side is perfectly acceptable and an easy way to remove these fat laden additions from your healthy salad.
6. Opt for dishes which are grilled, baked, steamed, poached or cooked in own juice rather than fried.
7. Order sides of vegetables or green salad to fill up on rather than chips.
8. If you are drinking alcohol, try opting for spritzers instead or alternating between sparkling water and wine. It will reduce your calorie intake, as let's face it alcohol is "liquid sugar". It will also reduce the effects of the hangover the next morning.
9. Another note on alcohol which is important to remember, it can remove your inhibitions, now whilst dancing naked on tables is a great form of exercise, throwing away any best laid plans for healthy eating is not so sensible.
10. Party your socks off on the dance floor! You can burn up to 500 calories in one night. There is nothing like a good boogie to put you in a good mood so get up on the floor and funk it!

So there you have it, a quick ten step guide to surviving a healthy festive season. In the meantime, have a Merry Christmas from all of us at the Life Practice clinics.

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