

Nutrition News

for Seniors



Provided by the Nutrition Division of the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

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Enjoy Guilt-Free Holiday Celebrations

Worried that enjoying a traditional holiday meal and party foods with family and friends will destroy healthful food habits you nurtured all year? The good news is that any foods, even beloved holiday dishes, can fit into a healthy eating plan with practice and planning.

Trying to lose weight during the holidays, of course, may be a self-defeating goal. So instead of trying to shed pounds, strive to maintain your current weight. Here's a plan to help you through the festivities:

Before the Party

Prepare small, lower-calorie meals during the day so you can eat celebration foods without overdoing your daily calorie intake. Enjoy a small, low-calorie snack such as fruit or whole-grain toast before you head out the door to curb hunger and avoid overeating at the party.

If you're bringing a dish, make it healthy, delicious and low-cal. Vegetables with a yogurt or cottage cheese dip, fresh fruit or whole-grain pasta salad are sure to be crowd pleasers.

At the Party

Remember that conversation is calorie-free, and you may eat less if you settle into the festivities instead of heading straight to the buffet. Ask for sparkling water and lime, which doesn't have calories, and start mingling.

Wondering how to build a healthful plate at the buffet? Start by making just one trip and choose the foods you really want to eat. Try filling half your plate with lower-calorie party foods like fruits and vegetables.

Sometimes, just a taste satisfies a craving or curiosity, so keep portions small.



Post-Party

Balance "party calories" with more physical activity. Even though it may be cold outside, these everyday activities can take only 10 minutes at a time, and will help you get moving during the holidays:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Play actively with your kids, grandkids or pets.
- After dinner, take a walk with your family—even if it's just around the block.
- Catch up with housework: wash the windows, vacuum or sweep.

Source: *The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, www.eatright.org.*

Words of Wisdom

"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver."
-Mahatma Gandhi

Food in Focus: Dates are dandy, taste just like candy

In traditional ancient diets, a bowl of dates was always on the table at mealtime as a sign of hospitality from the host to his guest. A date would often accompany a cup of coffee or tea, which were consumed unsweetened because the date provided the desired sweetness to complement the drink. The custom continues today in many cultures.

How to Select Dates

Choose dates that are shiny, uniformly colored and not broken. Dates just have 30 percent moisture - the lowest of any whole fruit. This makes them the only naturally "dehydrated" fruit.



How to Store

Dates have a long shelf life. They may be stored at room temperature in an airtight container for several months or refrigerated for up to a year.

Nutritional Benefits

Dates have no fat, cholesterol or sodium and are a good source of fiber. They also have a natural balance of many minerals such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, copper, iron, selenium, potassium and manganese. These minerals work in harmony to lower blood pressure.

Antioxidant Quality of Dates

Dates are also a healthy food because they are higher in polyphenols than any more commonly eaten fruit, according to the U.S Department of Agriculture. Polyphenols are a type of antioxidant - a substance that protects the cells in our bodies from external and internal toxic effects.

Source: Courtesy of California Date Commission, www.datesaregreat.com/health-nutrition

In the Kitchen: Angel Delights

Frances Van Vynckt, 78, combined dates, toasted rice cereal and coconut into an easy no-bake treat that won "Eating Well" magazine's 2008 cookie contest.



- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ½ cups chopped pitted dates, (8 ounces)
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups toasted rice cereal, such as Rice Krispies
- 1 cup shredded coconut

Preparation

1. Combine butter, sugar and dates in a large saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, until the butter is melted, the sugar is no longer white and the dates are mostly melted, 8 to 15 minutes. The mixture should be a shiny, brown sticky mass. Remove from the heat.
2. Add salt, vanilla, cereal and coconut; stir well to combine.
3. When cool enough to handle, squeeze and roll the mixture into 1-inch balls. Place on a wax paper-lined baking sheet and refrigerate until chilled. If you cover the cookies, they will keep in the refrigerator for up to a week. Makes about four dozen cookies.

Nutrition Facts per Cookie: Calories 52, Fat 2g (1 g sat , 0 g mono); Cholesterol 3mg, Carbohydrate 10g, Protein 0g, Fiber 0g, Sodium 15mg, Potassium 39mg,

Source: Eating Well Magazine, November/December 2008

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