



Navigating Holiday Meals

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GEORGINA NURSE PRACTITIONER LED CLINIC

It's the most wonderful time of the year. Yet for many, it can also be a stressful time of the year. Between family gatherings and holiday parties, navigating food choices and balancing them with other health priorities can be overwhelming. Here are some tips to help you manage common challenges with holiday eating.

Challenge #1 - Dealing with Food Pressure

The Scenario: You are mindfully working away at making healthy choices at a holiday meal when someone pushes onto you a second helping or a food you are trying to limit.

What You Can Do: It's okay to simply say no. We often worry that others may feel offended, but it is possible to respect our own boundaries while respecting other's feelings. Try some of these responses:

"No, thank you. That looks delicious but I'm very full now."

"No, thank you. That was delicious. Could I save it for later?"

"No, thank you. I'm trying to be more mindful with my portions, but I absolutely enjoyed every bite of that meal!"

Challenge #2 - Dealing with Judgmental Comments

The Scenario: You have a complex relationship with food and your body. You are working hard away at it but comments from others about what you are eating or how much you are eating can really trigger some negative emotions or out of control eating.

What You Can Do: In some cases, we really may be faced with a judgmental family member or even a stranger. In other cases, we may be interpreting a comment as judgment

when it wasn't intended to be. Mentally preparing yourself with some self talk statements like these can help:

"I am the expert of my own body."

"I can listen and trust my body to tell me what I need."

"I know that this way of eating is the best for me right now."

"I am eating both for health and for enjoyment."

Challenge #3 - Managing food restrictions

The Scenario: You have strict food restrictions because of allergies or a medical condition but you are attending a dinner party where you are not sure what foods will be on the menu.

What You Can Do: It's important to be prepared before arriving to the party. Connect with the host ahead of time and let them know about your food restrictions. Ask them whether their dishes will contain any of the ingredient(s) you need to avoid. If they are not sure and you are comfortable, ask for a more detailed list of ingredients they will be using. You can also suggest to do a pot luck or ask to contribute a dish to the party!



Cranberry Turkey Cobbler

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients:

1 tsp oil
1 celery stalk, diced
1 small onion, diced
2 tsp dried sage leaves
1/4 tsp pepper
4 cups chopped cooked turkey
1 cup cranberry sauce
1/2 cup water or low sodium chicken or vegetable broth

Herb Biscuit Ingredients:

1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 cup all purpose flour
2 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp dried thyme leaves or Italian seasoning
2/3 milk
2 tbsp oil

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. In a small skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Cook celery, onion, sage and pepper for about 5 minutes or until softened. Scrape into a bowl and stir in turkey, cranberry sauce and water until combined.
3. Spoon mixture into a sprayed 8-inch square baking dish; set aside.
4. To make herb biscuit topping: In a bowl, whisk together the two types of flour, cheese, parsley, baking powder and thyme leaves. In a small bowl, whisk together milk and oil. Stir into flour mixture until combined. Using a spoon, dollop six spoonfuls of the dough on top of turkey mixture and spread lightly.
5. Bake in preheated oven for about 20 minutes or until top is golden and filling is bubbly. Let cool before serving.

Source:

1. Recipe by Professional Home Economist and Cookbook Author, Emily Richards. Retrieved from Heart and Stroke Foundation (<https://www.heartandstroke.ca/healthy-living/recipes/poultry/cranberry-turkey-cobbler>)
2. Photo by Rasa Kasparaviciene from Pexels