

Top Tips and Activities! A Healthy Christmas Dinner



While many people see Christmas as a time of indulgence, it is possible to reduce the amount of calories, saturated fat and salt in a traditional Christmas dinner without losing out on flavour or festive fun.

Vegetables

- ★ Try to steam, boil or microwave vegetables. These methods of cooking don't require the addition of any fat and steaming and microwaving prevent the leaching of vitamins and minerals from the vegetable
- ★ Resist adding salt to the water when boiling vegetables or butter or salt to cooked vegetables. Try adding fresh or dried herbs, spices and lemon juice or zest to give extra flavour
- ★ Try to serve a variety of seasonal vegetables such as parsnips, Brussels sprouts, red cabbage, swede and turnip may not usually be eaten throughout the year and are all at their best around December
- ★ If you find your vegetables still need a little salt try a low sodium salt, which adds flavour without contributing to daily sodium intake

Potatoes

- ★ Boiled or mashed potatoes with a little low fat crème fraîche and olive oil provide a carbohydrate portion without the high calorie content. Adding roasted garlic or onions, low fat cheese or herbs such as rosemary or chives will also add to the flavour
- ★ If Christmas isn't Christmas without roast potatoes, try parboiling the potatoes first and finishing them in the oven brushed with a little olive oil. Cutting potatoes into larger chunks will also help to reduce the amount of fat absorbed

Meat

- ★ Turkey is lower in fat than goose and is a great source of protein and also contains zinc and B vitamins which are needed for effective nerve function and digestion. However, try to serve without the skin as it is often high in saturated fat

- ★ If you are serving turkey, use a metal rack or trivet to allow the fat to drain off straight away

Gravy

- ★ Shop bought stocks can be high in salt. Try making your own gravy using the juices from roasting the turkey or water from boiling vegetables. If using meat juices, allow the fat to settle on the surface and remove before using
- ★ Add extra flavour to your gravy using herbs such as rosemary or parsley or even a spoonful of cranberry sauce

Bread Sauce

- ★ Use semi skimmed or skimmed milk to cut down on the fat content. If you find it lacking in flavour add a glove of garlic to compensate

Stuffing

- ★ Try a fruit based stuffing such as cranberries or apricots rather than sausage meat. Chestnuts add an extra festive flavour

Christmas Pudding

- ★ Instead of the traditional cream or brandy butter, try serving Christmas pudding with low fat yoghurt, custard or crème fraîche
- ★ If you find Christmas pudding a little heavy after lunch, serve a festive fruit salad with tangerines, pears, cranberries and pomegranate. Or you could make a fruit crumble using seasonal fruit and serve with low fat yoghurt, crème fraîche or custard

Portion Sizes

- ★ Try to base the meal on vegetables and carbohydrates rather than meat
- ★ Only cook what you need and don't be tempted to overfill plates, this often leads to over eating
- ★ Eat slowly. This will help to stop you feeling uncomfortably full and make your meal more enjoyable
- ★ Try to stop eating when you feel satisfied, do you really want that second helping of Christmas pudding?