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KEEP THANKSGIVING PLANS LITE AND DELICIOUS

Many Americans will be planning their Thanksgiving menu this week. Do you or any of your guests have special dietary needs that must be considered for the holiday table? Limiting fat, sodium, calories, and/or sugar need not dampen holiday plans.

Small changes in preparation can add up to lighter Thanksgiving fare that is both delicious and satisfying. Offer your guests a selection of raw vegetables, pretzels, or baked chips with low-fat dip when they arrive. Try mixing nonfat or low-fat plain yogurt or cottage cheese with some herbs, spices, mustard, and/or horseradish for a flavorful but not fat-laden dip. Salsa is another fat-free dip that is enjoyed by many.

Canned skim evaporated milk can substitute for half-and-half or cream in soup recipes. Experiment with herbs, spices, and pureed roasted vegetables for a wonderful flavor boost. Consider serving a broth-based soup for savings in calories and fat.

Baste the turkey with fat-free turkey or vegetable broth or a mixture of fruit juices such as orange, pineapple, apple, or cranberry. The meat will stay moist and flavorful without the added fat of a traditional butter basting.

Use defatted turkey stock for making gravy or moistening stuffing. Chill homemade or canned stock until the fat solidifies on the surface then simply spoon it off. You save 100 calories for every tablespoon of fat removed.

Use skim or 1% milk instead of whole milk or cream to prepare mashed potatoes. Lower saturated fat by switching from stick to soft tub margarine made with liquid canola, safflower, soy, or sunflower oil. Reduce the amount of margarine slightly and flavor the potatoes with garlic or chive; most will not notice any difference in the final product.

Lighten up your sweet potatoes by mixing them with orange or pineapple juice instead of marshmallows. Try substituting acorn squash for sweet potatoes for even greater calorie savings.

Serve rolls with apple or pumpkin “butter” instead of margarine for additional savings in fat. Serving flavorful breads and rolls such as rye or pumpernickel can eliminate the need for a spread of any kind.

Reduce the amount of sugar in homemade cranberry sauce and season with orange juice, orange zest, ginger, cloves, or cinnamon. Chopped apple, orange, or pear can also be stirred into the cranberry mixture.

No Thanksgiving feast is complete without dessert. Lighten your baking by cutting back on cholesterol-rich egg yolks and using more cholesterol-free egg whites. Try the commercial egg substitutes found in the market or use 2 egg whites for every whole egg called for in the recipe. You can also discard every other yolk and substitute a teaspoon of polyunsaturated oil for each unused yolk.

Skim or 1% milk can be used in baking to replace whole milk with no noticeable difference. Sherbet, ice milk, or nonfat frozen yogurt can replace high-fat ice cream in desserts.

Remember that a single-crust pie offers a substantial savings in calories and fat than a double-crust pie. Low-fat cookie crumbs such as vanilla wafers or gingersnaps can substitute for a traditional pastry crust in some pie recipes.

More and more people want to avoid the discomfort of overeating and the frustration of taking in too many calories at the Thanksgiving table. By making small substitutions and watching portion size, everyone can enjoy the holiday.

Here are two recipes that can lighten your Thanksgiving menu deliciously.

STUFFED SWEET POTATOES

Serves 6 -- 100 calories per serving, < 1 gm fat

3 large sweet potatoes

3/4 cup juice-packed, crushed pineapple, drained (reserve juice)

1/4 cup reserved pineapple juice

1/4 cup chopped dates

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1/8 teaspoon salt

Scrub potatoes and prick with a fork. Bake in a 400° oven for 1 hour or until tender. Remove potatoes and set oven to 350°. Halve the potatoes lengthwise and scoop out pulp. Mash the pulp and combine with remaining ingredients. Divide mixture evenly between potato shells. Bake for 15 minutes or until heated through.

HEART-SMART PUMPKIN PIE

Serves 8 -- 200 calories per serving, 5.3 gm fat

Gingersnap Crust:

1 cup gingersnap crumbs

2 tablespoons margarine, melted

Vegetable cooking spray

Combine crumbs and melted margarine in a small bowl; stir well. Firmly press mixture into a 9-inch pie plate coated with cooking spray.

Pie Filling:

2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
1 cup evaporated skimmed milk
1 cup canned or mashed cooked pumpkin
1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
1/4 teaspoon grated orange rind
3/4 cup plain nonfat yogurt, room temperature
2 egg whites, room temperature
1/8 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon chopped pecans, toasted
Orange rind curls (garnish)

Sprinkle gelatin over milk in a heavy saucepan; let stand 1 minute. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until gelatin dissolves. Add pumpkin, pumpkin pie spice, and grated orange rind; stir well. Chill until the consistency of unbeaten egg white. Fold in yogurt. Beat egg whites and salt at medium speed of an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Add brown sugar, a little at a time, and beat until stiff peaks form. Fold egg white mixture into pumpkin mixture. Pour mixture into prepared crust and chill. Before serving, sprinkle pecans over pie and garnish with orange curls.

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