

Daily Union Article  
Saturday, November 4, 2017  
Title: Healthy Holiday Menus

This time of year, many of us are scrambling to finalize holiday plans and decide what will be served at our family and friends festivities. Have you ever considered the dietary needs of those who will be sharing the meal you are preparing? There is a growing need to be aware of the dietary challenges of those you invite to your home to share a meal with. Diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and other medical conditions often warrant some recipe adjustments. Derailing a person's efforts to adhere to dietary restrictions can set their health back considerably. Even for those who don't have dietary restrictions, it's still recommended we make better food choices.

The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that we reduce the amount of fat, sugar, and salt that we eat. These same guidelines encourage us to include more fiber in our diets by eating whole grain foods and more fruits and vegetables.

Our holiday meals often toss those suggestions out the window. As much as I like apple and pumpkin pie, a slice of each do not count as a serving of fruit or vegetable, respectively.

One way to improve your holiday menu is by reducing the amount of the foods you prepare that are high in fat, sugar, and salt. Another way to improve your menu is by altering the recipes of the foods you prepare by using less fat, sugar, and salt.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension service recently published a bulletin "Altering Recipes for Better Health" that offers ideas and guidance on making adjustments to recipes to help us meet the recommendations offered by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

### **Changing the Ingredients**

Some recipes can be altered by reducing an ingredient or substituting one ingredient for another. Some general reductions and substitutions to reduce the amount of fat and sugar in your diet, while increasing fiber are provided here:

#### **When trying to decrease the total fat and/or calories:**

- ✓ Consume less at the holiday dinner table. I know that's not the favorite tip of the holiday season, but it really is one of the best ways to reduce the total fat and calories you consume.
- ✓ Instead of butter, margarine, oil, shortening, or solid fat – in general cooking, use  $\frac{1}{4}$  less liquid oil or solid fat called for in the recipe. Example 1: if the recipe calls for 1 cup oil or fat, use only  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup. Example 2: If the recipe uses  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup shortening, only use 3 tablespoons of oil.

- ✓ Instead of butter, margarine, oil, shortening, or solid fat – in baking, use applesauce or another fruit puree for half of the fat in your recipe. You may need to reduce baking time by 25%. Example: If the recipe calls for 1 cup of fat/oil, use ½ cup of fat/oil and ½ cup applesauce.
- ✓ Instead of whole milk, half and half or evaporated milk, use skim milk, 1% milk, evaporated skim milk, fat-free half and half, or plain soy milk with calcium.
- ✓ Instead of whole-fat cheese, use reduced fat cheese, added at the end of the baking time or use part-skim mozzarella.

**When trying to reduce sugar:**

- ✓ Instead of using sugar, you can reduce sugar by 1/4 to 1/3 in baked goods and desserts. If a recipe calls for 1 cup, use 2/3 cup. Cinnamon, vanilla extract, and almond extract can be added to give an impression of sweetness. NOTE: Do not remove all sugar in yeast breads as sugar provides food for the yeast.

Replacing the amount of sugar described in a recipe with a sugar substitute works well for most baked products. Calorie-free sweeteners are hundreds to thousands of times sweeter than table sugar, so be sure to read the label when performing the conversion. The sweet taste will vary with product combination or amounts of each sweetener used.

NOTE: Using the alternative sweetener products affect the baking time, browning, and texture of the product. Not all sugar substitutes are recommended for baking.

- ✓ Instead of frozen or canned fruits with sugars, use unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit canned in its own juice, or water. If you preserve your own fruits, decrease or eliminate sugar when you can or freeze them.
- ✓ Instead of using syrup, substitute pureed fruit, such as no-sugar-added applesauce or lite or sugar-free syrup.
- ✓ Instead of fruit-flavored yogurt, choose plain yogurt and add fresh fruit slices, or use light versions of yogurt.

Dips and dressings can quickly add up extra calories to your day's food consumption. Plain low-fat yogurt is a great base to use in place of mayonnaise or whipped salad dressings. Here is a tasty alternative to some of the high fat, high sugar dips and dressings.

**Dilled Low-Fat Yogurt Dressing or Dip**      Serves 6 (1/4-cup servings)

- 1 cup low-fat yogurt
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon dill seeds or dill weed

1/4 teaspoon dry mustard

1/4 teaspoon minced garlic

Mix all ingredients together in a small bowl. Refrigerate for 2 or more hours to let flavors blend. Serve as a dressing on a salad, or serve as a dip with raw vegetables such as cauliflower and broccoli flowerets, celery and carrot sticks, whole snap peas, cucumber and tomato wedges, sliced summer squash, and sweet pepper slices.

Offering fresh vegetables to snack on is a great way to add low-fat, higher fiber food options to your holiday snacking and meals. For more information about making menu changes for better health, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!