



*Year after year, most of us pack on extra pounds during the holidays. But with a little know how, you can satisfy your desire for traditional favorites and still enjoy a guilt-free Thanksgiving. Here are some great ideas that will help you stay on the healthy course during the holidays.*

### **Shop Early**

Start buying holiday meal items early to spread the cost over several weeks. According to Consumer Price Index summary data, food prices have increased 3.2% since March (which may be due to consumers stocking up on food, cooking more at home, and closure of several meat processing plants).

If you are buying a turkey, another reason to buy early is to have the widest selection of turkey sizes; correspondingly, purchase a frozen, rather than a fresh, turkey. Aim for a <11 lb turkey for a meal with a smaller gathering of family and friends. For a meal with ~4 people, a frozen boneless turkey breast roast is another option (photo at right).

Remember: Thawing a turkey can take 3-6 days depending on weight! Post an alert to remind you to transfer the turkey from the freezer to the refrigerator. When thawing, place the turkey in a shallow pan and put on the lowest shelf possible in the refrigerator to avoid cross contamination of other foods.



## **Enjoy a Healthier Meal**

Thanksgiving is the holiday which revolves around food! Still, there are simple steps to enjoy a healthier meal. Modest reductions in carbohydrates and sodium in some traditional Thanksgiving foods, as well as limiting overeating of leftovers, can help balance the 'indiscretions' of Thanksgiving Day.

To lower carbohydrates, skip the roll/croissant/bread; these carbs are not unique to Thanksgiving (you can eat these any day of the year). To lower sodium, don't add extra salt to the served meal; the turkey, dressing, gravy, and most sides already have salt added during preparation. Or, prepare healthier Thanksgiving favorites which incorporate modest modifications which are practically unnoticeable! (See the 4 recipes at the end.)

To limit leftovers, cook less food initially or plan to give away or freeze the leftovers (preferably in individual portions for easy reheating). Eating too many high calorie leftovers on the days after Thanksgiving can be unhealthy than the Thanksgiving meal itself. Instead of overeating after the holiday, plan non-eating activities such as running, biking, or taking a walk around the neighborhood or park.



## **Tips for Preparing and Serving Food**

In this present pandemic, it is recommended to wear a mask while cooking, keep surfaces clean and sanitized, while always washing hands before and after touching raw foods, and before serving food.

Limit serving duties to one individual and pre-plate as much as possible for appetizers, salads, sides and desserts; this will avoid the sharing of utensils unlike buffet style. Second servings can be also be pre-plated, e.g. and kept warm in the oven or cool in the refrigerator. Ramekins (e.g. glazed ceramic dishes, as shown below) are very useful to pre-plate single serve portions of food, especially to keep food warm in the oven.



Lastly, one simple way to avoid accidental sharing of glassware is to write your guests' names on the base of each wine glass with a water-based marker.

# Recipes

## Appetizers

Make individual crudité cups with hummus, pico de gallo or tzatziki sauce topped with raw sliced vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber, radishes, bell pepper, celery, carrots, green onions, cherry tomatoes, snap peas and zucchini).



## Lower Sugar Cranberry Sauce

### Ingredients

1 (12 oz) bag of fresh cranberries  
1/3 cup orange juice  
2/3 cup water  
½ cup sugar

### Directions

1. Wash cranberries, sort out any un-firm berries.
2. Bring all ingredients except cranberries to a gentle boil.
3. Add berries and gently boil stirring until most berries have burst ~ 10 minutes.
4. Serve warm or cooled in the refrigerator.

**Nutritional Facts (per serving):** Yield 12 servings (1/4 cup)

Calories: 43, Total Fat: 0 g, Saturated Fat: 0 g, Sodium 1 mg, Total Carbohydrates: 11 g, Dietary Fiber: 1 g, Protein: 0 g

## Calorie Controlled Thanksgiving Sweet Potatoes

### Ingredients

2 lb sweet potatoes peeled and chunked into 1" pieces  
1 TBS brown sugar  
1 TBS maple syrup  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
½ tsp cinnamon  
¼ tsp ground cloves  
6 oz container of plain nonfat Greek yogurt

### Directions

1. Boil sweet potato chunks until soft ~ 8-12 minutes.
2. Drain well and mashed well with brown sugar, maple syrup, vanilla extract cinnamon, ground clove and yogurt.
3. Distribute into ramekin dishes and bake for 10 minutes at 350°
4. Top each ramekin with 10-15 mini marshmallows and bake until marshmallows are browned.

**Nutritional Facts (per serving):** Yield 8 servings

Calories: 178, Total Fat 0 g, Saturated Fat: 0 g, Sodium: 57 mg, Total Carbohydrate: 41 g, Dietary Fiber: 3 g, Protein: 5 g



## **American Heart Association's Green Bean Casserole**

### **Ingredients**

1 pound frozen green beans (French cut is best), thawed  
1 10.5-ounce can reduced-fat, low-sodium cream of mushroom soup  
1/2 cup low-fat sour cream  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1 small onion (cut into thin strips)  
Cooking spray  
1/4 cup whole-wheat flour

### **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a 13 x 9 x 2-inch glass baking dish, stir together the green beans, soup, sour cream, and pepper until well blended. Bake for 20 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, spread out the onion strips on a baking sheet. Lightly spray the onion strips with cooking spray.
4. Sprinkle the flour over the onion strips, tossing to coat.
5. Lightly spray a medium-large skillet with cooking spray. Cook the onions on medium-high heat for 3 to 4 minutes, or until crispy, stirring occasionally.
6. When the casserole is done baking, remove it from the oven. Stir half of the onions into the green bean mixture.
7. Top with the remaining onions. Bake for 5 minutes, or until the onions on top are browned.

**Nutritional Facts (per serving):** Yield 8 servings

Calories: 77, Total Fat 2 g, Saturated Fat: 0.5 g, Sodium: 138 mg, Total Carbohydrate: 12 g, Dietary Fiber: 2 g, Protein: 3 g

## **Mini Pumpkin Pies**

### **Ingredients**

48 mini fillo dough shells  
1/3 cup sugar  
¼ tsp salt  
½ tsp cinnamon  
½ tsp ginger  
½ tsp nutmeg  
Dash of ground cloves  
1 egg  
1 cup pumpkin puree  
1 tsp vanilla  
5 oz evaporated milk  
Light whipped topping



### **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line baking tray with parchment paper for easy clean up.
2. In a medium bowl, using an electric beater, combine sugar, salt, spices, egg, pumpkin, vanilla and evaporated milk until well blended.
3. Line mini tarts/crusts on baking tray and using a small spoon, fill each tart/crust.
4. Bake for ~ 15 minutes until filling appears set and shell/crust begin to brown.
5. Let cool, refrigerate, and when ready serve topped with low calorie whipped topping.

**Nutritional Facts (per serving 4 tarts):** Yield 12 servings

Calories: 149, Total Fat 5 g, Saturated Fat: 1 g, Sodium: 119 mg, Total Carbohydrate: 22 g, Dietary Fiber: 1 g, Protein: 4 g

**Submitted by Susan Rodder – Registered Dietitian - 2020**