

THE YORK UNIVERSITY STAFF ASSOCIATION HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEWS AND VIEWS

The season is upon us again, whether we like it or not. Some of us embrace the holidays with warm hearts, looking forward to decorating our homes, baking cookies with the kids and devoting a few minutes to thinking about each individual family member and friend while mulling over the gift list. Christmas is also a time traditionally given to overindulgence as Christmas drinks, office parties, end-of-year farewells and family get-togethers fill our December calendar. With the risk of sounding a little like the Scrooge, please be sensible this year.... For many of us Christmas can be a very stressful time. The expense of buying gifts, the pressure of last minute shopping and the heightened expectations of family get togethers can all combine to undermine our best intentions. Not this year! We are going to enter into the New Year feeling refreshed, energized, healthy, and relaxed. Here are some practical suggestions to help make this Christmas the best yet!

Contrary to popular belief, there's a lot of goodness in the standard Christmas dinner. If you like your turkey dinner, you are in luck: turkey is a very low fat meat. It is a good source of protein and vitamin B. Watch out for those extras like stuffing, bread and gravy. You can reduce the fat content in your gravy by starting with a can of fat free turkey gravy. Then add your turkey drippings. (Season to taste) Mashed potatoes are a favourite Christmas dinner side dish. It's the one item people generally heap on their plate. Reduce the high carbohydrate content by using both potatoes and cauliflower. Simple mash both together and you have the added benefit of veggies.

When it comes to snacks, temptation is all around us at throughout the Holiday Season. If you are hosting make the traditional favourites less calorie heavy. Sliced fruits and veggies are always a great choice, just be leery of store bought dips made with high fat sour cream and cream cheese. Instead use low fat ranch dressing or mix some chopped herbs into low fat yogurt. Tomato based dips such as salsas are always a great option. Serve rice cakes/cracker instead of chips. Low fat popcorn –with a little added green or red food colouring is always a hit. Clementines are healthy seasonal treat. Even some seasonal nuts such as roasted chestnuts are low in fat and a great source of vitamins.

Cheers! To making your celebration toasts with fewer calories and less fat. Beverages can add up calories fast without any real nutritional value. If you're watching your weight, some drinks will kill your diet. Obvious ones to look out for are creamy cocktails, but keep an eye on your intake of premixed drinks and cocktails in general, including the obligatory rum and eggnog. Choose dry versions of all alcoholic drinks - for example dry cider or dry white wine - as these are lower in calories than sweet versions. Opt for low-calorie mixers where you can. By

replacing half of the juice in any cocktail with sparkling water you will also cut your calories in half. Just be sure that whatever juice you choose is 100% juice, not full of artificial flavors and sugars. Of course, there is also the array of festive holiday concoctions found at coffee chains across the country. Some coffee drinks are more like dessert and can have hundreds of calories. Try buying smaller sizes, and asking for 'skinny' drinks that use skimmed milk, also avoid cream, flavoured syrup or sugary toppings.



Christmas is a time for merry making but it can have its pressures too. With those out of town relatives coming for weeks, the kids overexcited, the tree to decorate, presents to buy, food to cook... It's no wonder the festive feeling can fizzle out. Make a list, check it twice and stick to a budget. The Christmas season is the best time to shop online. Retailers are notoriously offering free shipping or greatly reduced shipping during the holiday season. Online shopping will help you avoid those trips to the packed mall, and you can browse the available items at your convenience. Delegate, don't try to do everything yourself. If you need help with the cooking, shopping or the decorating, ask for it. I know it can be difficult but, don't say yes to everything. Christmas is a time for giving, but that doesn't mean you have to give until it hurts. If you're swamped, don't overextend yourself by volunteering to help with both the school Christmas party and the Christmas pageant.

It's a wonderful life. Take a step back when everyone is enjoying themselves and remind yourself of how lucky you are.



Warmest thoughts and best wishes
For a wonderful holiday
And a very happy new year.

Kerriane Brown

December 2013