

**Q.** I'm pretty sure that all of my traditional holiday foods are unhealthy. But I'm afraid that the holiday meals won't feel the same without them. Should I serve them anyway?

**A.** Eating healthy meals doesn't mean giving up some of those too-rich favorite family recipes. Many of your holiday favorites can be made healthful with slight modifications to your recipes. Your family and friends probably won't even notice a taste difference. Here's what the National Institutes of Health suggests for healthier substitutions:



**Milk/Cream/Sour Cream**

- When a recipe calls for whole milk or cream, replace it with low-fat (1% fat) or fat-free dry or evaporated milk.
- Instead of sour cream, blend 1 cup low-fat, unsalted cottage cheese with 1 tablespoon fat-free milk and 2 tablespoons lemon juice, or substitute plain, fat-free, or low-fat yogurt or sour cream.

**Spices/Flavorings**

- Use a variety of herbs and spices in place of salt.
- Use low-sodium bouillon and broths, instead of regular bouillons and broths.

**Oils/Butter**

- Use cooking oil spray to lower fat and calories.
- Use a small amount of vegetable oil, instead of lard, butter, or other fats that are hard at room temperature.
- In general, diet margarines are not well suited for baking. Instead, to cut saturated fat, use regular soft margarine made with vegetable oil.
- Choose margarine that lists liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient on the food label.

**Eggs**

- In baking or cooking, use 3 egg whites and 1 egg yolk, instead of 2 whole eggs, or 2 egg whites or 1/4 cup of egg substitute, instead of 1 whole egg.

**Meats and Poultry**

- Choose a lean cut of meat and remove any visible fat.
- Remove skin from chicken and other poultry before cooking.

**Sandwiches and Salads**

- In salads and sandwiches, use fat-free or low-fat dressing, yogurt, or mayonnaise, instead of regular versions.
- To make a salad dressing, use equal parts water and vinegar or lemon juice, and half as much oil.
- Garnish salads with fruits and vegetables.

**Soups and Stews**

- Use cooking spray, water, or stock to sauté onion for flavoring stews, soups, and sauces.
- Use a small amount of skinless smoked turkey breast, instead of fatback to lower fat content but keep taste.
- Use skinless chicken thighs, instead of neck bones.
- Remove fat from homemade broths, soups, and stews by preparing them ahead and chilling them. Before reheating the dish, lift off the hardened fat that formed at the surface. If you don't have time to chill the dish, then float a few ice cubes on the surface of the warm liquid to harden the fat. Then, remove and discard the fat.

**Breads**

- To make muffins, quick breads, and biscuits, use no more than 1–2 tablespoons of fat for each cup of flour.
- When making muffins or quick breads, use 3 ripe, well-mashed bananas, instead of 1/2 cup butter or oil. Or, substitute a cup of applesauce for a cup of butter, margarine, oil, or shortening—you'll get less saturated fat and fewer calories.

**Desserts**

- To make a pie crust, use only 1/2 cup trans fat-free margarine for every 2 cups flour.
- For chocolate desserts, use 3 tablespoons of cocoa, instead of 1 ounce of baking chocolate. If fat is needed to replace that in chocolate, add 1 tablespoon or less of vegetable oil.
- To make cakes and soft-drop cookies, use no more than 2 tablespoons of fat for each cup of flour.

