



Back away from the Brie!

# Eat, Drink, and Still Shrink

The temptation to munch on high-cal foods is as hard to avoid as mall traffic this time of year. To help you detour around fat traps, we've created a road map for healthy holiday eating. *By Leslie Goldman*

→ When your social schedule begins to expand during the holidays, so does your waistline. "Most people attend tons of festive events—and nearly all of them center around fattening food," says Michelle May, M.D., author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*. Add seasonal stress and zero time to cook or hit the gym, and you have a recipe for holiday weight gain. Well, not this year. Here's a plan for dodging diet pitfalls—everything from thousand-calorie eggnog lattes at the mall food court to button-popping family dinners.

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## At the Office Holiday Party...

**The danger:** An open bar and endless platters of spring rolls and pigs in a blanket

### The detour:

→ **STEP 1: KEEP MOVING.** If you're planted next to the food table, you'll shovel chips and dip into your mouth all night long. "So stay far, far away," says Danine Fruge, M.D., director of Women's Health and Family Medicine at the Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa in Miami. "You won't eat mindlessly if you have to cross the room to get to the food."

→ **STEP 2: BE PICKY.** Passed hors d'oeuvres, which hover at every turn, are small, but they add up—fast. To avoid eating 2,000 calories worth of canapés, limit yourself to three that you love. Been waiting all year for bacon-wrapped scallops? Go for it. But pass on the crab cakes and other fried fare.

→ **STEP 3: SIP SMARTLY.** With alcohol, the goal is to keep both your calories and your buzz under control. Some options:

- A single shot of vodka, gin, or rum mixed with club or diet soda and a squeeze of lime. It will set you back only about 100 calories, says Christine Gerbstadt, M.D., R.D.

- Champagne or pink Prosecco. "Not only are they low on the calorie chart—around 80 to 120 per glass—but they're also more likely to be sipped rather than guzzled," says Kristin Reisinger, R.D.

- Light beer or wine. Most have fewer than 150 calories per serving. If you're the type to make several trips to the bar (no judgments!), Fruge suggests asking the bartender to fill your glass only halfway each time.

## At the Food Court While Shopping...

**The danger:** "Having to make decisions diminishes people's willpower," says Kathleen Vohs, Ph.D., an associate professor of marketing at the University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management. So all the choices you face at the mall (point-and-

shoot camera or digital camcorder for your man? Espresso machine or French press for Mom?) will make you that much more vulnerable to temptation at the food court.

### The detour:

→ **STEP 1: PACK SNACKS.** Malls are filled with kiosks hawking softball-size cinnamon buns and soft pretzels on steroids. Keeping portion-controlled goodies in your bag will make other snacks easier to resist. Stick 30 pistachios or 24 almonds in a ziplock bag with two dried plums, or tote a Fiber One Oats & Chocolate bar. The carb/protein combo in these foods will keep you full.

→ **STEP 2: SIDESTEP SEASONAL SIRENS.** An economic theory called the scarcity principle explains why we're such suckers for holiday treats. "Decades of research show that items we perceive as being in limited supply seem more desirable to us than nonscarce items," says Vohs. Holiday-themed coffee drinks and sweets are often more caloric than regular ones, so it's safer to stick to the basics.

→ **STEP 3: CHEW ON IT.** Pop in a piece of gum to keep your mouth occupied and out of trouble. Gum can satisfy a sweet craving, and studies show that the chewing sensation sends appetite suppressant messages to your brain, says Reisinger.

## As You Bake Holiday Treats at Home...

**The danger:** "It's easy to think that 'tastes' are calorie-free," says Los Angeles-based dietitian Ashley Koff. But just because two spoonfuls of cookie dough fail to register emotionally doesn't mean they don't count. (In fact, they count right up to 500 calories.)

### The detour:

→ **STEP 1: OPEN A WINDOW.** Nothing smells as good as the scent of cinnamon and sugar wafting through your kitchen, but allowing it to linger for hours can trigger you to eat more. Light a green-apple-scented candle (which studies have shown can reduce

## Cancel Out the Calories

→ Another way to combat seasonal weight gain? Make like a menorah and burn, baby, burn.

Calories burned per hour by a 140-pound woman:

Activity	Cal
Cutting down a Christmas tree	382
Wrapping gifts	95
Shoveling snow	382
Ice-skating	350
Shopping for a New Year's Eve dress	146

appetite) or crack a window to air out the tempting aroma.

→ **STEP 2: CLEAN AS YOU GO.** Have a pan of hot, soapy water on standby and plunge batter-covered beaters and spoons into it once you're done with them. "This protects you from nibbling," says Koff. And cleanup is that much easier.

→ **STEP 3: SAVE YOUR DOUGH.** When you're tempted by a cookie-dough-laden mixing spoon, remember this: The raw eggs in that dough may contain salmonella, a bacteria that can cause food poisoning and was the reason for the recall of more than 380 million eggs earlier this year.

## At Your Family's Holiday Dinner...

**The danger:** Variety may be the spice of life, but it's the scourge of your scale. "The more options there are, the more we want to try," says Koert Van Ittersum, Ph.D., an associate professor of marketing at Georgia Institute of Technology.

### The detour:

→ **STEP 1: B.Y.O.D.** Offer to bring a healthy dish. Your stressed-out hostess will welcome the contribution, and you'll have a safe go-to.

→ **STEP 2: PICK A PLATE WITH PURPOSE.** Van Ittersum suggests starting your meal by loading a dinner plate with salad (dressing on the side). Then switch to a smaller salad plate for your main course (studies show we eat less from smaller dishes).

→ **STEP 3: PRACTICE PORTION CONTROL.** "Your total amount of carbs—potatoes, cranberry sauce, stuffing—should be the size of your fist," says Koff. "Shaq, for example, can eat a lot more mashed potatoes than you or I can or should." The same goes for lean proteins, which should be the size and thickness of your palm (no fingers).

## When You're Coming in from the Cold...

**The danger:** Don't kid yourself into thinking that you've burned so many extra calories keeping warm on that winter walk or sledding excursion that you need to refuel...with eggnog. "Cold weather alone does not increase your caloric needs in any significant way," says Pete McCall, a physiologist at the American Council on Exercise.

### The detour:

→ **STEP 1: STAY HYDRATED.** Without sweat as a cue during cold-weather activities, you can easily dehydrate. If your body misinterprets your thirst as hunger, that Gruyère fondue will own you. Carry a water bottle and sip generously.

→ **STEP 2: WARM UP.** Eating has a thermodynamic (heat-generating) effect, explains nutritionist Heidi Skolnik. So we often reach for food not necessarily because we're hungry, but because we're cold. After a wintry outdoor activity, bypass the kitchen and toss a log onto the fire or snuggle up in a blanket. Still hungry? See Step 3.

→ **STEP 3: DRINK YOUR SNACK.** Fill a mug with skim or low-fat milk and a tablespoon of Ghirardelli Sweet Ground Chocolate & Cocoa, and you'll have a rich, satisfying treat for around 100 calories, says Skolnik. Or better yet, have a cup of green tea—it contains catechins, compounds that can boost calorie burn.

### Zero-guilt indulgences

→ Check out our low-fat, low-cal holiday recipes at [WomensHealthMag.com/Pleasures](http://WomensHealthMag.com/Pleasures).