

Greatist

The One Thing Top Nutrition Experts Do to Stay Healthy During the Holidays

Charlotte Andersen December 2, 2014



Pecan pie! Chocolate mousse! Candy cane truffles! Roast beast! Whether your tastes range from traditional to [Seussian](#), holiday food can inspire anxiety or ecstasy—or both—depending on your mind-set. Here's the good news: The average weight gain for the holiday season is just one pound. Now for the bad news: While that might not sound like much, research shows we don't lose it, and that one pound [adds up](#) year after year. And the news is worse for people who are already overweight, who add about [five extra holiday pounds](#) each year.

Sweet treats and rich meals can be landmines for health-conscious people, yet no one wants to feel deprived during the [hap- hap-iest season of all](#). But no need to fear—there are sensible ways to navigate this territory. And who better

to show you how to do it than healthy eating experts themselves? We asked the country's top nutritionists and dietitians to tell us the single rule they use personally to make it through the season without [overdoing it](#) or [stressing](#) so much that they miss the festive fun.

[Lindsey Joe](#), Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist

My one rule: Eat what you love, leave what you like.

Instead of piling your plate a mile high with things that don't really tantalize your taste buds (fruit cake, we're looking at you!), pick only the foods that give you true enjoyment. If something doesn't make you swoon, leave it on the sideline.

[Erica Giovinazzo](#), R.D., Head Coach and Nutritionist at Brick CrossFit and BodyChange Dietitian

My one rule: Keep your treats to one day a week.

The biggest mistake people make at the holidays is making Thanksgiving a four-day feast instead of a one-day indulgence. Then the holiday parties come and all of a sudden you're giving yourself an excuse to have treats nearly every day. Rather than letting your holiday feast roll into pie for breakfast, limit your splurges to one event per week.

[Lisa Moskovitz](#), R.D., CEO of NY Nutrition Group

My one rule: Nix the guilt.

Feeling guilty after eating foods you don't usually allow yourself to eat can breed more unhealthy behaviors. So abandon those negative voices in your head, give yourself permission to enjoy the indulgence guilt-free, and then remember to get back on track with your normal eating routine the very next day.



[Justin Robinson](#), Registered Dietitian

My one rule: Don't eat something just because it's holiday food.

Listen to your body; most people eat particular foods like [pumpkin pie](#) on Thanksgiving or down cups of eggnog at a Christmas party because "that's what we do during the holidays." Noshing without thinking about what you're putting into your body and why makes you ignore your internal cues of hunger and satiety. Do you really even like pumpkin pie or eggnog? Or if you could have any treat would you choose your favorite ice cream or [hot cocoa](#) instead? Just because it's limited doesn't mean you have to eat it.

[Deborah Orlick Levy](#), R.D., Carrington Farms Health and Nutrition Consultant

My one rule: Eat low to high (when it comes to calories).

Start with a broth-based soup or salad, then move on to [lean protein](#), and by the time you reach those triple-fudge [brownies](#), a few bites will be all you need to feel satisfied.

[Teresa LaMasters](#), M.D., Weight-Loss Specialist at UnityPoint Clinic, Des Moines

My one rule: Alternate your bubbly with sparkling water.

On average most adults consume almost 100 calories a day from [alcoholic beverages](#). Since avoiding alcoholic beverages altogether may be hard during this time of merriment, alternating between an [alcoholic beverage](#) and a zero-calorie sparkler can help you avoid pouring on the pounds. Plus sparkling water keeps things festive, and, bonus, you'll avoid entering the [hangover zone](#), a not-so-happy holiday tradition.

[Ashley Koff](#), R.D. for Earthbound Farm

My one rule: Balance acid with alkaline.

Holiday foods are full of "acid formers" like sugar, alcohol, and meat, so make sure you balance all those rich foods with plenty of "alkaline formers" like lemons and organic greens. While not all nutrition experts agree with the alkalinity theory, which says that eating too much of some types of foods can upset the [pH balance in the body](#), it does make sense to balance out your heavier dishes with plenty of greens.



[Hannah Disterdick](#), R.D., Wellness Specialist for One to One Personal Physician Network

My one rule: Bring the punch.

Offer to bring the party punch, then "upgrade" your traditional recipe with natural sweeteners like [stevia](#) or 100% fruit juice. To go even healthier, ditch the booze and replace it with club soda for a sparkling mocktail. Although they might miss the buzz, no one will miss the extra calories, and you'll be comfortable knowing there's at least one light drink so you can skip the eggnog.

[Jessica Setnick](#), R.D., Senior Fellow at Remuda Ranch at the Meadows, International Federation of Eating Disorder Dietitians

My one rule: Make holiday treats year-round.

Prevent some of that "last-chance eating" by promising to make your mom's pumpkin pie in February or your favorite green bean [casserole](#) in July. Knowing it will be available again means you won't feel the urge to "go for broke" and overeat it now.

[Adrienne Raimo](#), RD, and Founder & Director of One Bite Wellness

My one rule: Veg-out on veggies.

Try swapping light [pureed cauliflower](#) for carb-heavy mashed potatoes and add side dishes with more vegetables, like ratatouille, to bolster the nutritional value of the meal and keep you satiated so you don't overeat. Bonus: All that extra

fiber will help keep you regular, even if you do over-indulge a bit on the cheese platter.

Valerie Orsoni, Nutrition expert, founder of [LeBootCamp](#)

My one rule: Don't be fooled by the "health halo."

File this under sad-but-true: You can gain weight even if you eat healthy. You can overdo it with the veggies and dip or creamy [asparagus soup](#), just like you can with ice cream—except with the ice cream at least you know it's an indulgence. So make sure you're not eating something based solely on its health-food aura and keep an eye on your [portion sizes](#).



[Ana Goldseker](#), CNE, Director of Nutrition for Nava Health and Vitality Centers

My one rule: Go to social gatherings to gather (not to eat).

You go to family gatherings, work parties, and other social events to see your friends and loved ones—so see them! Use these times to socialize and be present rather than rummaging for holiday treats. A good idea is to "pre-eat" something with protein and vegetables to stabilize your blood sugar so you can keep your focus where it belongs: on present company.

[JJ Virgin](#), author of three New York Times bestsellers, including *JJ Virgin's Sugar Impact Diet*

My one rule: Bring out the skinny jeans.

Elastic waistbands, "relaxed fit" sweaters, and other loose clothing are practically an engraved invitation to overeat. Leave those roomy pants in the back of the closet. Instead, bring out the bandage dresses, skinny jeans, slim-fit suit, or nipped-in blazer—whatever ensemble makes you feel sleek and slim. Not only will you look hot, your outfit will offer subtle reinforcement to keep you from getting seconds (or thirds) on those [peppermint bark cookies](#).

[Alissa Rumsey](#), R.D., Spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

My one rule: Just say no... to food pushers.

Whether it's Grandma's caramel cake or your best friend's first attempt at a holiday roast, often you may feel forced to eat certain foods simply because [people keep offering them](#) to you. Put on a genuine smile, politely decline, and then offer a compliment. "Oh Emily, these truffles look amazing and you're so thoughtful to make them for me! I'm too full to enjoy them right now, but could I take a couple home?" They'll feel loved and you won't feel pressured to show your affection through busting a gut.



[Lindsay Martin](#), R.D., Nutritionist for Hilton Head Health

My one rule: Rock the bed-head.

Between holiday traveling, work schedules, and all that shopping, it can be easy to skimp on sleep in order to get your to-do list done, but getting a

consistent [six to nine hours of sleep](#) every night helps regulate hormones, promotes recovery from workouts, and prevents daily fatigue—plus it keeps you from face-planting directly into your mom’s apple pie. There is really no such thing as “catching up” on sleep, so the key is consistency . Bonus: The bed-head tousled look is totally in right now!

[Megan Roosevelt, R.D.](#), Founder of Healthy Grocery Girl

My one rule: Be a snack smuggler.

Traveling, shopping, and running errands during the holidays can lead to fast food, skipping meals, or surrendering to the siren call of Cinnabon. To keep your appetite in check, never leave home without a snack. Choose options made with real ingredients to truly energize and nourish your body. Check out our suggestions for on-the-go [high-protein snacks](#).

[Lisa Reed, C.S.C.S.](#), Personal Trainer

My one rule: Burn the bird.

No, we're not telling you to intentionally char your holiday dinner (although that's one way to save calories). Rather, try a post-feast interval workout like Reed's "burn the bird" sweat-fest: Have everyone start in a single file line down the sidewalk. Begin moving, with the person in the front of the line setting the pace—you can run, sprint, or walk. Then have the person in the back of the line move to the front of the line and set a new pace. Repeat until you have either reached 30 minutes or completed 2 miles. Consider this a new form of family bonding. Go ahead and high-five the line as you run past, treat your team to a full on sprint, or goof off and perform [lunges](#) down the line to the front.

[Edwina Clark](#), Registered Dietitian

My one rule: Don't "save up" calories.

Fasting before a big meal can backfire worse than posting a Justin Bieber fan video on YouTube. Low blood sugar from hunger increases cortisol levels, which leads to cravings for fatty, salty, and sugary foods. Instead of saving up for the big meal, nibble on healthy snacks like [raw veggies](#), [nuts](#), and [fruit](#) throughout the day to avoid a full-blown gorgefest where no crumb is left behind.

[Andrea Szebeni, R.D.](#), Nutritionist for the Lighthouse Recovery Institute

My one rule: Detox your taste buds.

Over time we adapt to eating "hyperpalatable" foods that are high fat, high salt, or high sugar (or all three). By eating these foods regularly, we erode the ability of our taste buds to appreciate subtler flavors and we train them that a hit of fat/salt/sugar is normal. The good news is that you can reset your taste buds by cutting out processed foods for just one week. Then when you do indulge in a treat, you'll be able to appreciate all the flavors and be sated with just a few bites. You may even find that processed foods you used to love don't even appeal anymore.

[Lauren Harris-Pincus, R.D.N.](#), of *Nutrition Starring You*

My one rule: Three bites and good night.

Stick to the three-bite rule for desserts: The first bite is the best, the last the grand finale, and every bite in between is the same. In three bites, you get the full [dessert experience](#), so really focus on savoring those three and you're less likely to [overindulge](#).



Simone Gloger, R.D., Head Nutritionist for The Dukan Diet

My one rule: Trim the trimmings.

It turns out that most traditional holiday dishes are really not that unhealthy—think lean [turkey](#), [roasted vegetables](#), [nuts](#)—but adding in all the additional trimmings to the dishes are what make the calories soar into the stratosphere.

Simply eliminate extras such as gravy, cream sauces, butter, and crust on pies, and you'll axe loads of unnecessary calories and fat.

Anne Ricci, R.D., Founder of Anne's Healthy Kitchen

My one rule: Eat mindfully.

It sounds silly, but lots of people don't even realize when they're eating. Taking the time to choose food you really want to eat and then actively focusing on enjoying the smell, taste, and texture of each bite will naturally help you slow down and stop when you're full.



Kristy Del Coro, R.D., Senior Culinary Nutritionist of SPE Certified

My one rule: Eat a good breakfast.

Your mom was right: Eating a [healthy breakfast](#) sets the tone for the entire day. If you start your day off with a doughnut or leftover pie, you can trigger a relentless sweet tooth the rest of the day. Don't skip breakfast either, as that will leave you dragging through your morning and more likely to overeat later because you're starving. Your best bet? Start with something that has lean protein, complex carbohydrates, and some healthy fat to give you energy and keep you satisfied until your next meal. Del Coro's favorite: An omelet made with one egg and two to three egg whites; easy-to-cook veggies like spinach, mushrooms, or sautéed onions; fresh herbs if you have them; and a touch of grated Parmesan cheese. Add fresh fruit and whole-grain toast to really round out the meal.

Maggie Moon, R.D., Author of the *Elimination Diet Workbook*, owner Everyday Healthy Eating

My one rule: Eat seasonally.

Summer gets all the credit for tasty fruits and bountiful veggies, but winter has [its superstars](#) too. Feast on gorgeous seasonal fruits like pomegranates, mandarin oranges, and red grapefruit. Not only are they at peak season for optimal quality and flavor, they're packed with nutrients. Pistachios, chestnuts, and walnuts also make special appearances around the holidays, so feel free to eat a handful or two before hitting the buffet. These nuts are packed with satiating fiber and healthy fats to help keep your appetite from going rogue.

Anika Christ, R.D., Senior Manager of Life Time Weight Loss at Life Time Fitness, Inc.

My one rule: Use the "fork trick."

One of the biggest pitfalls of holiday eating is not being able to tell when you're full and no longer truly enjoying the food you're eating. To help you answer this question try the "fork trick": Once you take a bite of food, place your fork down on the plate, and let go of the fork. Chew your food, swallow, and then pick up your fork again. The key to this trick is actually letting go of the fork. This will remind you to slow down, enjoy your food, and converse with friends and family. By eating more slowly, you'll be more in touch with your body's satiety signals.

Michael Wood, C.S.C.S., Founder of Sports Performance Group

My one rule: Watch out for sneaky sugar.

Sure you know that pumpkin pie with whipped cream or chocolate lava cake is a sugar-bomb, but the sweet stuff hides in innocuous places like sauces, seasonings, and processed foods. Suss out sneaky sugars and eliminate the ones you won't miss, like the barbecue dipping sauce or the packaged crackers, to keep your blood sugar and weight stable. Wood says women should aim to stay under 100 calories per day from sugar while men should stick to 150 calories or less.

[Ashley Pettit](#), Certified Holistic Nutritionist, Fitness Chef, and Personal Trainer

My one rule: Drink half of your body weight in ounces of water.

It's easy to confuse thirst with hunger, leading to mindless snacking that never satiates. To make sure you're [staying hydrated](#), drink half your body weight in water. So if you weight 140 pounds, aim for 70 ounces of water over the course of the day. For added detoxification, try adding [ginger](#) or [lemon](#).

<http://greatist.com/eat/holiday-healthy-eating-tips>