

8 Thanksgiving Dinner Foods You Can Eat More Of

It's countdown to Turkey Day and for most Americans that means preparing and enjoying traditional favorites, including casserole, turkey, rich meats, stuffing and pie.

Considering that the average Thanksgiving meal packs about 3,000 calories and 200 plus grams of fat, you'll likely stuff a few extra pounds on your frame too. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Tracy Daly, a registered dietician and nutrition educator and counselor at the San Diego State University in San Diego, suggested that by simply eating smarter, you can still enjoy your Holiday favorites, minus the calories and fat.



1: Eat More Turkey Breast

While the other traditional meat, prime rib, is mostly rich in fat, white roasted turkey meat is a good source of protein, iron, zinc potassium and B vitamins. Also, at 41 calories per portion size (no bigger than a deck of cards) turkey breast doesn't even come close to the 330 calories for a moderately sliced piece of the other meat.

#2: If It's Red Meat, Make it "Loin"

If Thanksgiving means must-have "red meat" on your plate, pick one that has the word "loin" in it.

Loin will give you a leaner cut, and thus, contains less fat than other red meats. The lower the percentage ratio of fat on the food label, the leaner the cut: a 98/7 percentage ratio is great, because 7 percent of fat means less fat and less calories.

#3: Green bean casserole

Green bean casserole, made with sautéed green beans and Campbell's new "Healthy Request" line—soups containing less calories, fat and sodium than Campbell's traditional line of soups,—are a healthier alternative to casseroles prepared with fried onions and a high-fat cream soup.

When in doubt, though, reach for salad as described below instead.

#4: Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes made with skim milk and a smaller amount of whole butter as opposed to margarine, which often contains hidden trans fats, are both delicious and healthy. Sweet potatoes are loaded with Vitamin A and with their skin intact, are also rich in fiber.

Trans fats or saturated fats increase your risk for heart disease and can raise the levels of LDL or bad cholesterols, and therefore, should be avoided.

#5: Salads with Dressing on the Side

The secret to eating a healthy salad isn't so much hidden in the salad as it is in the dressing.

Many salad dressings are high in calories and saturated fats. You can limit your calorie intake from dressing with this trick: Dip your fork into the salad first and then 'lightly' into a side dish of any low-fat dressing. Then you'll taste the dressing on your tongue first, which keeps you satisfied without adding calories.

Choose low-fat over fat-free dressing. Products that are labeled "fat-free" often contain more chemicals, but are similar or equal in calories to low-fat items. If you're worried about your waist line, it's best to stay away from such high-caloric ingredients as whole eggs, bacon bits, croutons, and most cheeses.

#6: Stuffing With Broth, Not Turkey Fat

If you're watching your weight, stuffing made from traditional white bread, butter, fatty sausage and turkey meat is among the foods to avoid. However, if you know that the Thanksgiving stuffing has been prepared with chicken broth, chopped vegetables and a broth of lean veal, chicken or turkey sausage, and it's your favorite side dish, you can eat up without feeling guilty.

#7: Pumpkin Pie

What's a traditional Thanksgiving dinner without pie?

Well, it wouldn't be Thanksgiving. But there are choices. At 480 calories a slice, pecan pie is among the least healthful desserts. Try to go for pumpkin pie instead. At 180 calories a slice without the crust, it's a much leaner treat.

If you're bringing or making your own pumpkin pie, consider this lean pumpkin pie recipe: Choose a smaller crust instead of the big crust. Daly's own Thanksgiving recipe for a double layer pumpkin cheesecake uses ½ cup of apple sauce and ½ cup of olive oil instead of butter and a bottom layer of a mix of light cream cheese and cool whip. Also, mixing the pumpkin with vanilla pudding makes the pie less dense and leaner. Enjoy!

#8: Eggnog

Traditional eggnog, made from whole milk, has a whopping 343 calories.

Hence, if you're watching your diet, you may want to choose between eggnog and your favorite dessert; or simply enjoy your own "lighter eggnog," made from skim milk, low-fat milk or soy milk.

Tips

The best way to avoid overeating at the Thanksgiving dinner table is to eat small meals throughout the day. Planning physical activity during any part of your day can burn substantial calories.

Many health clubs offer their members an early "Turkey Burn Workout." If you're traveling or visiting family, simply start your day with a family walk, bike ride or shooting baskets outside; anything to get your cardio on.

When enjoying your favorite traditions, enjoy them while practicing portion control. Avoid going back for seconds and drink plenty of water throughout the day and throughout the meal to keep you full. The best way to control portions is to divide a 12-inch dinner plate into three sections of three-inch-sized circles with each circle representing one food group: Proteins, vegetables and starches.

Your ACE team wishes you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving!