

## **Tips on staying slim over the holidays**

By Anke Johnson, Certified Health Coach

Whether you're looking to fit into that snug little Gucci number for the holidays, to keep your happy everyday weight, or to get a head start on that weight loss New Year's resolution, learn how to avoid the fois gras and keep slim amidst the parties and festivities!

You know all about how you have to burn the same number of calories as you take in to keep extra weight off, separate your high and low glycemic foods, and exercise. You've done the math and it's not looking so simple. But when it comes to the holidays, rules get tossed aside for that beckoning double chocolate brownie topped with gooey caramel and chopped walnuts.

Feeling guilty? Don't. The thing is, if you're careful about what and how much you eat, indulging in a decadent delight is okay. "Nothing is sinfully delicious," writes Mireille Guiliano in her book, *French Women Don't Get Fat* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). "When you add an indulgence, make a corresponding reduction to compensate. Add another half hour of walking the next day. Skip the cocktail. Pass the breadbasket."

Before you head to the next office party or holiday get-together, keep the following tips in mind:

### **PRE-PARTY TACTICS:**

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#### **1. Have a bite before the party**

"When we become overly hungry we have less control and willpower to make healthy choices regarding the type of food chosen and the portion size we consume," explains Gina Sunderland, a registered dietitian in Winnipeg. A great bite is a high protein shake; it keeps your blood sugar level and decreases that cravings you might have at the soiree!

#### **2. Show up with a nutritious and delicious gift**

If you're uncertain as to what will be served (or already know the sweet spread Mom puts out) offer to bring a platter of raw veggies and low-fat dip.

#### **3. Drink -- water that is.**

It's a powerful way of controlling one's weight, virtually without sacrifice, a simple and highly accessible indulgence!

#### **4. Healthy options**

If you're doing the cooking, "have things like fresh fruit and fresh vegetables around so if you want to nibble you can eat healthy alternatives," offers Fran Berkoff, a registered dietitian with Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto.

### **AT THE PARTY**

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#### **1. Mingle**

A party shouldn't be all about food. Speak with friends, family and colleagues; ask about their holiday plans, what's new in their lives, what their resolutions will be for the coming year. If music is playing and if the setting allows, head to the dance floor. There's nothing like a good boogie-oogie-oogie to offset what you did eat at the snack table!

Whatever you do, don't stand by the buffet table or the bowl of chips; you'll be tempted to eat, even if you're not hungry.

#### **2. Scan the buffet table before filling your plate.**

"Pick things that are healthier and lighter in calories," says Berkoff. "So, fill up on sushi, for example, and then have a piece of deep fried chicken."

#### **3. Small servings**

Pick the lunch-size plate, then divide it into sections, says Sunderland. "Allow yourself one half for veggies and fruit, one-quarter for savory or carbohydrate-rich appetizers and one-quarter for dessert items."

#### **4. Have a treat**

"Eat something really delicious that you can only get once a year," says Berkoff. Pass on items available year-round like nachos and salsa, chocolate chip cookies and brownies.

#### **5. Share the sweets**

"Cut your own piece of dessert or cut your portion in half when it is served to you," adds Sunderland.

#### **6. Savor the fare**

"The pleasure of most foods is in the first few bites," writes Berkoff. "Eat one thing on your plate at a time, at least at the start of the meal when you can concentrate and enjoy the full flavors."

**7. Decrease the dressing** Nutritionists say women use too much on their salad thereby consuming more calories than necessary. Dip your fork in a small bowl of dressing, then

spear the salad. You'll get the same flavor but with fewer calories. I've been doing this for years and love the subtle flavor just a little dressing adds.

### **8. Brush your teeth**

Right after you eat. You'll be less tempted to snack when your mouth is clean. This is also a good tactic to help with late night snacking.

**9. Limit alcohol intake** Sunderland suggests no more than two alcoholic beverages per social gathering and alternating them with a light, non-alcoholic beverage, like a fruit juice spritzer or mineral water.

## **POST-PARTY CHECK-UP**

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**1.** If you're the host, stock your refrigerator with the healthy leftovers and send guests home with the goodies. If the guests don't want them, donate them to your local food pantry.

### **2. Get some exercise**

Call up some friends and go for a walk, head to the toboggan run or lace up your skates. If it's too cold outside, do some fast-paced window shopping in the mall. "Inactivity has recently been cited as the leading cause of obesity," says Sunderland. "Physical activity helps to give your metabolic rate a 'boost.'" A simple 30-45 minute walk every day will do wonders for your waistline, and yoga is a great balance for holiday stress or any activities that shorten your muscles, like running or weight lifting.

### **3. Scale back**

"Don't get upset about a single event. Balance it out with proper eating and exercising the next day," says Berkoff. "You're not partying every night."

### **4. Get some sleep**

Studies have shown that a lack of sleep increases certain hormones, which can lead to fat storage. During the holidays, meditation or a quick nap is also a great pick me up.