

Don't let holidays weigh you down

'Tis the season for having family gatherings, hanging decorations, lighting candles, giving gifts and, of course, eating. It's estimated that many of us will gain five to seven extra pounds during the holiday season.

You can enjoy the holiday spirit without getting the dietary fat that can add extra pounds and that can also contribute to obesity and other chronic health problems.

A healthy holiday goal is to eat healthy foods the majority of the

time, and not necessarily to avoid every special dish that may be high in fat or calories. Balance out a few traditional high-fat food favorites with some new lighter holiday ideas, such as fresh cranberry spritzer instead of eggnog.

Avoid eating marathons so common at this time of the year by making activity and not food the focal point of your holiday events. Play games, go on sing-alongs, or take a hike in the woods to burn extra calories and

get away from the dining table. If you think holiday baked goodies have to be high in fat and calories, try anise honey bites, strawberry rice pudding, Mandarin kabobs or poached apples with cranberry-cinnamon sauce.

ANISE HONEY BITES

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1 egg
- 1-1/2 teaspoon anise seed
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

About 2 cups flour (enough to form a soft dough)

Mix ingredients. With floured hands, shape dough into 1-inch balls and place them 2 inches apart on cookie sheets sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 350 degrees F. for 4 to 8 minutes or until the cookie bottoms are golden brown. Remove the balls from cookie sheets, cool completely and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

STRAWBERRY RICE PUDDING

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1-1/2 cups skim milk



Holiday delight: Cranberry-cinnamon sauce adds beautiful color with a spicy sweet flavor to these poached apples.

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 cup fresh, quartered (or thawed) strawberries
- Bring water and rice to a boil in

large saucepan. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until rice is soft (about 40 minutes). Meanwhile, in a medium-sized bowl, beat eggs, honey and skim milk. Mix the liquid into the rice and continue cooking, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens, about 15 minutes. Remove rice from the heat and stir in vanilla extract and strawberries.

MANDARIN KABOBS

- 2 tablespoons honey
 - 2 tablespoons water
 - Mandarin oranges
 - 1/4 cup sesame seeds
 - Mint leaves
- Mix honey and water. Cut 24 mandarin orange sections with the mixture and roll them in sesame seeds. Put 6 orange sections on each of 4 skewers, alternating each one with a mint leaf. Chill the kabobs several hours before serving.

POACHED APPLES WITH CRANBERRY-CINNAMON SAUCE

- 4 medium baking apples

- 1/2 cup plus 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup fresh cranberries (about 4 ounces)
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

2-1/2 plus 2/3 cups water

Wash and core the apples. Place them in a large saucepan with 1/2 cup sugar and 2-1/2 cups of water. Bring to boil, reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 10 minutes, or until apples are just tender.

Baste them with the syrup in the pan occasionally. Meanwhile, in a medium-sized saucepan, heat the cranberries, cinnamon, 2/3 cup water, and 1/3 cup of sugar over medium heat. Simmer gently for 10 minutes. Cool the mixture slightly and puree in a blender or food processor until smooth. To serve, pour sauce on apples and into cored centers.

Information and recipes from the American Institute for Cancer Research. For a free brochure with recipes to celebrate good health, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (55 cents postage) to AICR, Dept. GH, Washington, D.C. 20069.

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See what's cooking in Christmas gifts

Still having trouble completing that gift list? Here are more great gift ideas from the American Institute for Cancer Research that can help your loved ones eat for better health in the new year.

■ **Microwave oven** - If you really want to splurge, a microwave oven can be a god-send to the person who is too busy to spend a lot of time in the kitchen. Microwaves are perfect for steaming healthful foods like fish and vegetables deliciously without fat.

■ **Non-stick pans** - A great way to cut fat in cooking, and they will last a long time if cared for properly by using only wooden or plastic utensils and nonabrasive cleaning materials. Other good fat-free cookware is made of anodized aluminum, or has a ceramic or enamel finish.

■ **Olive oils** - Dozens of specialty brands are now available in different grades of "purity" and can be purchased already flavored with herbs, in attractive bottles.

■ **Olive oil** contains mostly mono-unsaturated fatty acids and, while still recommended by health experts to be used in moderation like all fats, has been found to lower harmful blood cholesterol.

■ **Pasta machine** - For rolling and cutting home-made pasta. The ideal gift for anyone who loves to cook Italian style.

■ **Quinoa** - Quinoa is just one of several exotic grains that can live up one's everyday diet and supply whole-grain fiber. Gourmet and health food stores carry quinoa; a home-made gift pack might also include packaged barley, bulgur wheat and couscous.

■ **Roasting rack** - For placing in roasting pans to let the fat drip away from meats and poultry. (To defat those drippings for non-fat gravy, use a defatting gravy maker.)

■ **Salad spinner** - Avoid soggy salads with a reasonably priced salad spinner that spins and dries lettuce, spinach and other leafy greens quickly.

Rinse greens in the salad spinner's inside bowl which doubles as a colander. Then place the

smaller bowl into the larger bowl and snap on the top. Crank the handle, spinning for a minute and remove the top. The moist, but dripless greens are ready to serve.

■ **Spices** - A collection of new and different spices and herbs can add new flavors and variety to anyone's kitchen, all without adding fat. Some exotic mixtures to give include: Chinese five-spice powder (ground cinnamon, clove, anise, fennel and black pepper); Tex-Mex Chili Powder (paprika, cumin, oregano, garlic powder and a bit of cayenne pepper); and Indian curry (coriander, cumin, turmeric, fenugreek, dry mustard, black pepper, garlic powder, and cayenne pepper).

■ **Torra-cotta casseroles** - Bake marvelous, low-fat stews of vegetables, poultry, fish or lean meat using a torra-cotta stew pot that cooks foods gently and lets flavors intermingle. Available in most department stores.

■ **Unsalted snacks** - Get your friends and family to enjoy food with less salt, such as unsalted pretzels, low-fat gourmet crackers flavored with pepper and a variety of herbs, and unsalted, baked tortilla chips available at health food stores.

■ **Vegetable steamers** - For the best-tasting, best looking and most nourishing veggies cooked without fat, there are many varieties of steamers, ranging from authentic Chinese bamboo steamers to the new electric types available in most department stores.

■ **Wok** - Chinese woks are specifically designed not to burn food at high temperatures, because the heat is evenly distributed to cook a perfect stir-fry in just minutes, using minimal oil.

■ **Yogurt makers** - Non-fat yogurt is one of the best ways to add calcium to your diet.

With a yogurt maker, you can always have some on hand, made with your own original flavors (such as candied ginger or cinnamon).

■ **Zester** - A special orange and lemon grater will add a little extra zest to festive food and drinks.