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Eating healthy means picking recipes wisely

TASTE BUDS



LARRY
JANES

By just mentioning the word "holidays" around the Janes Gang household, you can easily gain a few pounds.

Our holidays start right after Thanksgiving. We spend a week dicing candied fruit and chopping nuts for the fruitcakes. We always purchase more filling because of the "eat-one-dice-one"

theory.

Then there's the week we put the out-of-state goody packages together for Uncle Hank in Phoenix, Aunt Phil and Uncle Ray in Houston, Barb and Tom in Idaho, and all our other friends and relatives. Our waistlines get larger by the package as we export cookies, fudge and homemade liquors.

There's little wonder how we pull it all off without becoming certified lifetime members of Overeaters Anonymous. But there is hope out there for folks like you and me. Millions of people make it through the holidays without gaining an ounce of the so-called "eight-pound holiday average" and without depriving themselves of the pleasures of holiday cooking and eating.

You can still limit calories, reduce salt and fat, and control sugar and cholesterol during your holiday eating regimen.

What's important is remembering not to abandon the basics of good nutrition and prudent meal planning. That means not making a dinner of Royal icing, M&M's and cherry sours while making a gingerbread house.

A recent trip to the local library — without, mind you, a trip to 7-Eleven for a munchie attack — found a gaggle of books on healthy holiday entertaining and eating.

Of the four books I checked out, the "American Diabetes Association Holiday Cookbook" by Betty Wedman proved to be the most helpful in planning healthy meals during an otherwise unhealthy eating season.

In her book, Dr. Wedman lists seven guidelines suggested by experts for promoting healthful eating and reducing food-related diseases. They are appropriate for the entire family. The guidelines are:

- Eat a variety of foods. The wider the variety, the less likely you are to develop a deficiency or an excess of any single nutrient. Needless to say, this does not include mixing M&M plain and peanut varieties.

- Adjust calorie intake and exercise for proper weight. Simply put, for every Hershey's kiss you eat while assembling a goody package, eat a carrot stick while using a treadmill.

- Limit consumption of high fat-foods. Fatty foods pose more than a weight problem. Excess fat, particular-

ly saturated fat and cholesterol, can contribute to heart disease. This year, I'm going to practice making just enough to send. I'll also carefully measure rather than guess at the amount of fat I use in recipes.

- Increase intake of unrefined carbohydrates and limit intake of refined carbohydrates. While all carbohydrates contain the same number of calories, unrefined carbohydrates burn more readily and don't turn into fat as easily as refined carbohydrates. Unrefined, or complex, carbs are found naturally in legumes, vegetables and grain products. I wonder if Aunt Phil would mind if I exchanged some fudge for some homemade pasta?

- Increase consumption of fiber-rich foods. Fiber, otherwise known as "roughage," is the portion of the food that cannot be readily digested by the body. A decorative glass canister filled with assorted beans and peas, herbs and spices with directions for a tasty homemade soup will do far better for a body than a jar of homemade red raspberry preserve.

- Reduce sodium intake. Sodium, like saturated fat, can be associated with health problems, notably high blood pressure. Convenience foods, commercial soups, salad dressings and peanut butter are all loaded with sodium. Uncle Hank loves to cook so this year his goody box will be peppered (excuse the pun) with an assortment of salt-free herb blends along with a suggestion on how they can improve the flavor of anything he makes without the use of added salt.

- Use alcohol sparingly, if at all. You've heard it before: Alcohol is high in calories and has almost no nutritional value. One or two drinks have proven to pose no harm in most adults. If alcohol is your weakness, may I suggest you temper your consumption with one drink, followed by a double-sized drink of water, juice or diet soda? This works for me.

So if the holidays see you watching your weight, it might prove beneficial to take the suggestions mentioned above seriously. Holiday eating requires some discipline but to help you get through, I've compiled a few favorites from Wedman's cookbook.

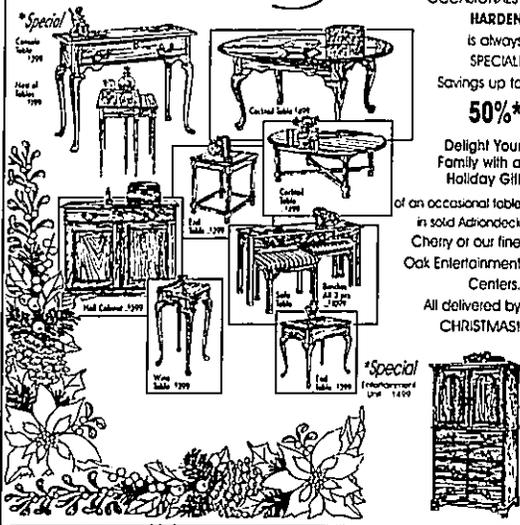
Try these recipes for a healthier holiday — they're loaded with flavor and taste great too!

STUFFED MUSHROOM CAPS

- ½ pound fresh whole mushrooms
- ¼ cup fresh grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ teaspoon dried basil
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme

Wash the mushrooms and separate the stems from the caps. Combine the stems with the Parmesan cheese, breadcrumbs, basil, oregano and thyme in a food processor or blender. Puree till stems are

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