

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Countdown the 12 Days to Christmas

It was the night before Christmas and all through the house not a creature was stirring not even a mouse. Wrong! Usually, with onset of the most wonderful day of the year, we are frantically dashing about, polishing silver, counting plates, and uncovering the dusty card table from years past. Then you start the long food journey and by Christmas day you're missing out on all the holiday cheer in the next room because you're too busy dicing, chopping and slicing. May I suggest this year be different; a little planning can make a world of difference.

The Twelve Days of Christmas - Don't forget to start today

Day 12 - Master Checklist
Every great event has great beginnings. A master plan and checklist is the key to success. Your list may include rentals, inventory of china, linen, serving pieces, time line for tasks to insure no last minute running.

Day 11 - Menu Planning
The most crucial part of a holiday feast is, of course, the food! In addition to family favorites this would be the time to gather recipes you've wanted to try, and if necessary, experiment. When menu planning, it's essential to have a good mix of items to fit everyone's needs including a few selections, which are on the lighter side. Try to make some things in advance. Many items, including baked goods and chutneys, can be made well in advance. Don't forget to place any special meat or bakery item orders well in advance so you're not disappointed on your last minute shopping trip to your favorite market.

Day 10
Purchase all your beverages. Remember to buy beer and wine at room temperature and then just ice down an hour prior to guest arrival in coolers or party tubs. It is hard enough fitting all the extra food items in the fridge without having to work around cases of pop, beer and wine.

Day 9
It is close enough now to the date of your event to make any reminder calls to family and friends about times and such. It's also a great time to assign tasks for family members to help with the preparation.

Day 8
It's a great day for holiday baking. Cookies and breads freeze great. Bring out your special holiday tins. Sweet filled tins make great gifts.

Day 7
Beat the last minute grocery store frenzy and pick up all your dry goods such as paper products, coffee, tea, canned and frozen items also. Make any last minute purchases you may need for your table.

Day 6
Plan your holiday table top. You can use phone books, boxes turned upside down placed on top of a bane line tablecloth. Arrange rice and table and cover with additional pieces of festive holiday linen thus creating different levels as a stage for your plates, bowls, etc. Give some thought to your centerpiece, how about some fresh pine branches placed in between rice? Holiday ribbon cascaded about? Candles are always a nice touch. Colors and textures will lend to your festive holiday tables. Think of your table as the stage and the food as the actors.

Day 5
Gather your china, serving pieces and linen. Double check for cleanliness and don't forget to polish the silver. This is also a good day for starting some cleaning, and to find your favorite Christmas CDs, cassettes, and records.

Day 4
The last place you want to be stuck on Christmas Eve is the grocery store.

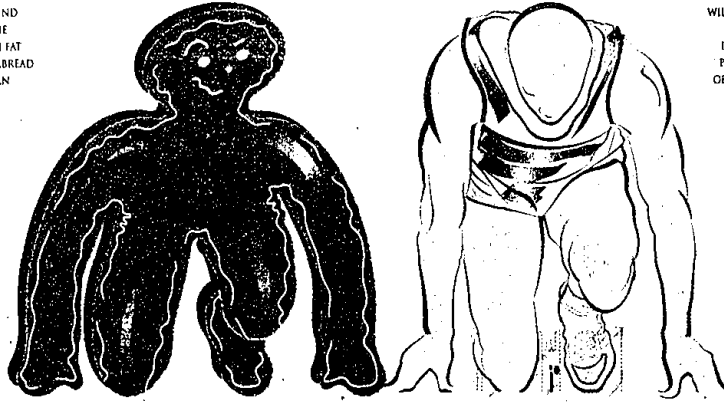
Please see **UNIQUE, 12**

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- For the Love of Food

LEAVE
BEHIND
THE
HIGH FAT
GINGERBREAD
MAN



HAVE
WILLPOWER
AND
DRINK
PLENTY
OF WATER

ON YOUR MARK GET SET FOR HOLIDAY EATING

By PEGGY MARTINELLI EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

The holiday season brings challenges and opportunities. Many of us look forward to spending time with family and friends, dressing up our homes and offices, and eating wonderfully prepared meals.

We need not look at holiday meals as a chance to "pig out" or worry that we'll lose control with all of the additional pressures that we face during this time of year.

I prepare for holiday eating the way a long distance runner prepares for a race.

Before the race, a runner needs to practice, practice, practice. The same is true before the holidays; practice eating sensibly. Build up your arm muscles so you have enough strength to push yourself away from the table. Practice eat-

Good Holiday Snacks

- Raw vegetables (very light on the dip)
- Shrimp cocktail (in moderation)
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa
- Pretzels
- Jordan almonds (in moderation)
- Nuts in the shell that you have to crack to eat
- Raw fruit slices with low-fat yogurt dip
- Grapes

ing wonderfully seasoned vegetables and new combinations of fruits, beans or grains.

The runner must prepare mentally for the race. She will think about how she will feel running during the competition. Before a holiday party, imagine yourself eating with restraint, enjoying each delicious mouthful and having lots of wonderful conversation.

The runner will choose clothing that is comfortable and makes her feel like a winner. For the holidays choose clothes that fit you well rather than the biggest, baggiest ones. If you wear clothes that are too loose, you won't notice your belly expanding from over eating.

The day of the race, the runner chooses her food carefully. Before you go to a party, eat a good meal so that you're less likely to graze uncontrollably all evening.

During the race, the runner will drink plenty of water to keep well hydrated. The same is true for the holidays; never underestimate the power of water. Enjoy plenty of cool, clear water before, during and after the party. Water keeps your skin clear and helps flush impurities from your body. Drink water liberally throughout the party, especially when you're

indoors in dry, heated places. Find the biggest, tallest glass you can, fill it with ice water, and sip and crunch your way through any holiday get together.

The runner puts her whole heart and soul into the race; always aware of her body and what it's doing. During a party, think about what you've been eating and how much. Listen to your body's internal signals. Breathe deeply and maintain control. Move yourself away from the food source, help with dishes, play with the children or take the dog for a walk.

After the race, the runner evaluates what she did right and where she may need to intensify her efforts. After the party think about what you ate that was especially satisfying and whether you feel you successfully "managed" your food intake. Congratulate yourself for eating vegetables, fruits, grains and for drinking water.

Relax, and then, prepare yourself for the next "holiday" run.

Peggy Martinelli-Everts of Clarkston, is a registered dietician and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington Hills-based food service and hospitality management company. Look for her story on the second

Sunday of the month in Taste. See recipes inside.

Company's Coming

Here are some holiday entertaining tips from the American Dietetic Association/National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics.

Appetizers

- Serve hummus with pita wedges
- Make fruit kabobs with pineapple chunks, melon balls, and ripe strawberries
- Create a cheese board with some newer low-fat varieties and an assortment of crackers and breadsticks
- Spread reduced-fat or nonfat cream cheese on ruffled/flat or nori crackers. Garnish with sliced tomatoes; cucumber slices and pimiento; or smoked salmon and dill
- Rely on low-fat or nonfat varieties of plain yogurt, ricotta cheese, or sour cream for dips. Flavor them with dry onion soup mix, salsa, chopped cooked spinach, chutney, or other flavorings
- Bake miniature vegetable quiches using low-fat cheese and egg alternative

Side Dishes

- Mixinate red and yellow pepper pieces, onion slices, baby carrots, and whole mushrooms in reduced sodium soy sauce, ginger and a little olive oil. Gently cook
- Sauté onions, mushrooms, and red pepper in a moderate amount of margarine. Add this mixture to prepared wild rice, barley, couscous, or buckwheat (kasha)

Finishing Tips

- Use reduced-fat or nonfat dressings or sauces for vegetables instead of butter, cheese, and cream-based sauces
- Skin fat from meat drippings before using for gravies or to flavor grains and vegetable dishes
- Cook stuffing and roast vegetables away from the bird to avoid contact with dripping fat
- Base with fruit juices rather than meat drippings
- Choose lean cuts of meat, remove visible fat
- Broil, boil, poach, or steam instead of frying

Hurry-up entrees are faster than take-out

MURIEL G. WAGNER



REGISTERED DIETITIAN

If your holiday schedule of shopping, entertaining and party going has turned the season from "ho-ho" to "oh, oh," I've got an early Christmas gift for you. I'm going to share three of my secret recipes for main dishes that will keep your energy up and satisfy your taste buds. These dishes are faster to prepare (5 to 10 minutes) than "ordering in," lower in fat and saturated fat, and higher in fiber than anything you could have delivered, or pick up at the deli.

The first recipe is made from ingredients that you can keep on your pantry shelf. There's absolutely no chopping or extraordinary ingredients. On days when you get home too tired to even think of cooking, reach for this recipe instead of the phone. Use a prepared low sodium salsa to reduce the sodium content by 75 mg. Pritikin makes a good-tasting one.

ABSOLUTELY 5-MINUTE CHILI WONDERFUL

- 1 can (14.5 oz.) Brook's Just for Chili Diced Tomatoes
- 1 can (15.5 oz.) Brook's Mild Chili Beans
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1 can (8.75 oz.) whole kernel corn, no salt added
- 3 ounces shredded fat-free Cheddar cheese

Mix beans, tomatoes, salsa and corn in a 2-quart microwave-safe dish. Cook on high for 4 minutes. Portion into four microwave-safe bowls. Divide cheese among bowls and return to microwave to melt cheese (about 1 minute). Serves 4.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 209; Total Fat 0g; Saturated Fat 0g; Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 900mg.

Food Exchanges: 1 Lean Meat; 2 Breads

The next two recipes are for fish - "regular" fish and everyone's favorite - tuna fish (but with a flavor twist). It's no secret that substituting fish and shellfish for meat helps to lower cholesterol. If you make your fish choice a fat fish like salmon, whitefish, sardines, lake trout or albacore tuna, your triglycerides will be lowered as well.

The problem is a lot of my patients think cooking fish is a big, smelly chore. But if the fish is fresh, it has no fishy odor. Frozen fish can be freshened by soaking it in milk before cooking.

Here are two fish dishes that I use to convince my patients that fish is one of the simplest and best tasting dishes to prepare. Remember, even if it is fish, it does have cholesterol, fat and calories. Use discretion in the portion size.

My patients usually approach the oven fried fish recipe with strong doubts - until they taste it. It's really crispy and crunchy. Apple and red pepper add a sweet tart accent to the tuna, revitalizing an old favorite.

OVEN FRIED FISH

- 1 pound fish fillet (catfish, cod, sole)
- 1/2 cup reduced fat buttermilk
- 1/2 cup cornmeal, white or yellow

Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat baking sheet with non-stick spray. Cut fish into four pieces.

Dip in buttermilk and then in cornmeal. Bake for 10 minutes per inch thickness, turning fish as fish browns.

Serves 4.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories 127; Total Fat 1.3 g; Saturated Fat 0.4 g; Cholesterol 61 mg; Sodium 284 mg.

Food Exchanges: 3 Lean Meat; 1/2 Bread

TUNA, RED PEPPER, RED APPLE AND RED ONION SALAD

- 2 cans (6 oz.) white albacore tuna, water-packed, rinsed, drained and chunked
- 1 red pepper, cut into strips
- 1 unpeeled Red Delicious apple, cubed
- 1/4 cup red onion, coarsely diced
- 1/3 cup nonfat mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

Combine nonfat mayonnaise and Dijon mustard. (Increase or decrease the Dijon mustard according to taste). Add tuna, red apples, red peppers and red onions. Serve on lettuce leaves or use as a sandwich filling.

Serves 4.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories 169; Total Fat 2.8 g; Saturated Fat 0.4 g; Cholesterol 32 mg; Sodium 399 mg.

Food Exchanges: 3 Lean Meat; 2 Vegetables

Muriel G. Wagner is a registered dietician and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter filled with recipes and nutrition tips. To subscribe, send a check or money order for \$13.50 to Eating Younger, P.O. Box 69021, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48069. Look for Muriel's column in Taste on the second Sunday of the month.