

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Happy holidays begin with good planning

Years of human history and folklore have left its imprint on our society, culture and family regarding the rich celebration, and all that accompanies, the Christmas season. The tradition that lives in the forefront of my mind are the scents of Christmas. Sure you can't beat the essence of fresh pine filling the air from a brightly lit Christmas tree, or the aroma wafting through the house of that special holiday roast. But my inner child is always yearning for fragrant scents of holiday baking. A warm rich cookie in one hand, and a piece of Grandma's fudge in the other, would conjure visions of sugar plum fairies dancing in my head, and best describe Christmas for me.

Even though some holiday food traditions have been revamped, shortened, or all together substituted, to fit the demands on our present day existence, many of us are still baking from scratch and making holiday concoctions.

Homemade sweets are such a thoughtful way to share Christmas and revel in the merry making, gift giving and exchanging. May I suggest picking up an old holiday baking tradition or beginning a new one to form your children's Christmas memories.

Twelve Days of Christmas

Back by popular demand - 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, and a 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 is the time to gather recipes you've wanted to try, and if necessary, experiment. When menu planning, it is 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 early. Many items, including baked goods and chutneys, can be made ahead of time. 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. Put beverages in coolers or party tubs and add ice an hour before guests arrive. 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 good day for holiday baking. Cookies and breads freeze great. Bring out your special holiday tins. Sweet filled tins make wonderful gifts.

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

DAY 6 - Plan your holiday tabletop. You can use phone books, boxes turned upside down placed on top of a base line tablecloth. Arrange risers on the table and cover with additional

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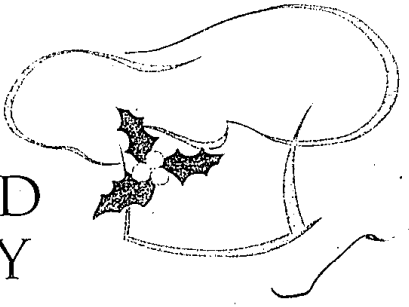
LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Old-fashioned holidays

HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

BE A DEAR, SERVE FUN, HEALTHY FOOD AT YOUR PARTY



By PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

I love the holiday season when houses are at their festive best and anticipation fills the air. Family traditions play center stage as we bring out our good china and favorite holiday ornaments, greet friends and family at parties and cook the traditional dishes of the season.

Christmas is a true delight for the senses, and cookies baking in the oven. The sounds of Christmas carols and jingle bells in department stores. The sights of beautiful holiday light displays on neighbor's homes. Santa in the mall. Fields blanketed in snow... and the wonderful tastes of all those holiday dishes!

Enjoying all our favorite foods this time of year is something we all look forward to. However, getting through the holidays without gaining a few extra pounds, is a challenging, especially if you are hosting a party. You want your guests to enjoy a wonderful time. But those wonderful dishes don't necessarily have to be heavy in fat and calories. Every host loves praise for fabulous food. It is very gracious to help guests (and yourself) stay healthy by serving flavorful, fresh and sensible food.

The role that food plays, especially during the holidays, goes way beyond basic sustenance. Food is intensely personal and making changes in the usual holiday banquet may be stressful. You don't need to serve only carrot and celery sticks to work good nutrition into your holiday party. The best advice is to choose wonderful fresh foods and use a light hand when adding high fat ingredients. Here are some of my favorites:

■ Shrimp cocktail
What could be more festive and nutritious than a big bowl of delicious shrimp? One of my colleagues has a huge punch bowl that comes with a stand. When assembled it looks like a

giant stemmed glass. She fills it with ice, puts the cocktail sauce in a little crystal bowl in the center and rings this with shrimp and lemon wedges. A little garland around the base and voila! A simply elegant hors d'oeuvre that at about 10 calories per medium shrimp, is an extravagant, indulgence.

■ Stuffed mushroom caps
Prepared according to the recipe I have provided, these tasty treats are only about 20 calories each!

■ Smoked Salmon
Served with mini bagels and honey mustard are great. Add salmon to fettuccine noodles for a wonderful pasta dish.

■ Hummus and tabbouleh stuffed tomatoes

For this, simply cut the top off a cherry tomato, scoop out the pulp and replace it with store-bought hummus. (It's easy to make hummus, but this isn't necessary with the wonderful selection of flavored hummus you can find in almost any supermarket that has a specialty food section.) Garnish with a dip of tabbouleh, this hors d'oeuvre is

tasty, colorful and under 25 calories each. Great as biscuits, rolled wafers and plain iced cookies go well with flavorful spiced hot teas and sparkling punch. I've included a favorite biscotti recipe. Serve them with cappuccino made with fat-free milk or they are delicious dipped in red wine for a wonderful ending to a fabulous evening!

Peggy Martinelli-Everts, of Clarkson is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a 32-year-old Farmington Hills based food service and hospital, by management and consulting company, specializing in foodservice management for hospitals, long-term care facilities, businesses, private clubs and private schools. HDS Services has approximately 200 management accounts throughout the United States and Japan. Look for her healthy feature on the second Sunday of the month in Taste.

See recipes inside.

THE TWELVE TIPS OF CHRISTMAS

- 1 Always serve food when you serve alcohol.
- 2 Offer activities other than just munching. Plan to sing Christmas carols, play holiday games or observe symbolic/religious traditions.
- 3 If you are entertaining, eat a little something before guests arrive so you don't feel like you have to eat quickly while serving.
- 4 Offer bottled or sparkling water as drink alternatives. served in champagne flutes with a strawberry, sparkling water is festive!
- 5 When buying wine for your party, remember that you will get four or five glasses per bottle. Be sure you have a good variety of wine on hand, as well as other non-alcoholic beverages. Sippers and juice-based punch are popular. A pitcher of sangria also goes over well.
- 6 When planning the hors d'oeuvre menu for your party, consider all the food. Grains like bread sticks and toasted pita points, vegetables like salsa dips and stuffed mushrooms, cut up fresh fruits and juice-based punch. Dairy foods such as low-fat cheese cubes and yogurt based dips and high quality protein like smoked salmon and deviled eggs.
- 7 It is a fact - we "eat with our eyes" as well as our mouth. Make food feel more satisfying by presenting it in a beautiful manner. Use mirrored tiles, elevated bases, holiday foliage and hollowed out vegetables to display food.
- 8 Use good quality reduced fat or nonfat ingredients whenever possible. Also, go easy on the added salt and sugar in recipes.
- 9 Replace some of the oil or shortening in a baked recipe using fruit purees (apple, banana or prune). Purees add moisture and boost nutrition. Depending on the recipe, substitute half as much fruit puree for fat. For example, use 1/2 cup of pureed prunes in place of 1 cup of butter. You may add a tablespoon or two of fat back into the recipe to achieve the best results.
- 10 Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Check your buffet table often to be certain food temperatures are appropriate to keep it safe and fresh.
- 11 Before they leave, give each guest a small gift. A single rose tied with a festive bow, a handmade Christmas ornament, a candle, some herbal tea, or gourmet coffee, seeds for an indoor herb garden, small containers of marmalade, chutney or gourmet mustard, home made granola mix in a festive wrapper or homemade flavored popcorn balls. It shouldn't be elaborate or expensive. The small token of your friendship will be a lasting reminder to your guests of the wonderful party!
- 12 Enjoy the holidays without fretting about all the things you "shouldn't" be eating. Be sensible, be selective, think about your food intake over the long run and not just on a meal-by-meal basis. Happy Holidays!

Tenderloin beef roast sure to please guests



MURIEL WAGNER

Standing rib roast was a holiday staple at our house. I can still smell the meat roasting and hear the fat crackling in the oven of our old gas stove. Mother always chose a roast of the first three ribs. She picked one that had lots of fatty streaks throughout the meat (marbling) to "guarantee tenderness," she said. If this is a traditional part of your holiday menu that you think you have

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to relinquish to fond memory. I've got some tasty news. My recipe is actually improvement on standing rib roast both gastronomically and nutritionally.

The tenderloin of beef roast that I am recommending is one of the leanest yet most tender cuts of beef. It's the cut that yields filet mignon steaks. The accompanying wine sauce, crushed peppercorns and garlic enhance the

mild flavor of the meat. Before their first visit to my office, many of my patients think that saying good-bye to meat is one of the first things that they must do to "Eat Younger." But that is not necessarily so.

Red meat has gained an unhealthy reputation because it can be a significant source of fat and saturated fat if the chosen cut is high fat and the portion is large.

Beef sold today is 27 percent leaner than my fondly remembered standing rib roast. Choosing a cut without the fatty streaks or marbling will further reduce the fat. This doesn't mean a dry,

tough roast. Carefully monitoring cooking temperatures and cooking time will ensure that "melt-in-your-mouth" goodness. Keeping the portion small (3 ounces cooked weight) and the cut lean helps to make meat a part of an "Eating Younger" diet. If your meal plan also includes lots of high fiber fruit, vegetables and whole grains.

Today's recipe calls for a piece of tenderloin cut from the thicker end called the butt. It usually weighs between 2 and 3 pounds. It's perfect for 6 to 8 people. Add some thick, non-fat oven fried potatoes (with the skins left on) and a

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