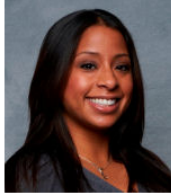




STUFFED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

A Q&A on healthy holiday eating from Susan's Healthy Gourmet nutritionist Carissa Sanchez



November 16, 2011 (San Diego)--The holidays mean big meals, which can unfortunately lead to big numbers on the scale. As the nutritionist at Susan's Healthy Gourmet, a service that prepares and delivers fresh, calorie-controlled meals to Southern California homes and offices, Carissa Sanchez understands how difficult it is to enjoy delicious holiday feasts while sticking to weight-management goals.

Traditional holiday meals are often filled with fats and cholesterol, with "heavy" foods appearing everywhere, from displays at the grocery store to the table at a dinner party. Here are some of her best tips to stay healthy and fit this holiday season:

How do you resist the temptation of all those goodies during the holiday season?

Resisting the temptation is never easy, but can be especially difficult during the holidays. The best advice is to just take a very small portion of whatever is being served so you can enjoy without overindulging. Another suggestion is to stop and think about whether the treat is worth the calories you'll be consuming – if you think you will feel guilty later, reconsider before you put the goody into your mouth. The point of eating holiday treats is to enjoy the "treat" of the season.

What are the healthiest choices to look for at holiday parties?

When I think of ways to be healthy at holiday parties, I consider both variety and portion. Portion-control plays an important role in making smart choices when it comes to food – take one small serving of what looks good and avoid the extras such as heavy sauces, toppings and sweets. A variety of color is also important and including vegetables on your plate is the best way to choose healthier options.

What are the worst choices, in terms of calories and other "bad stuff" (high cholesterol, sugar, etc.)?

The worst items to eat during the holidays are heavy sauces, gravies and anything cream-based. These items are high in calories and generally high in saturated fats. Unfortunately, most casseroles on the table contain a cream base, so choose wisely and limit the variety and portions when enjoying these.

What are some alternative ways you can make your holiday meals healthier at home?

A good alternative is to purchase the light version of items when preparing traditional dishes. You can also try to get lower sodium, reduced fat and low-fat versions of creams, milk and chicken broth to make the "bad stuff" a bit healthier. Also, limit the amount of butter in all of your holiday dishes and when baking, substitute part of your sugar in recipes whenever possible for alternatives such as Splenda or applesauce.

Any healthy holiday party dishes you would recommend making?

I love making "candied" sweet potatoes. I bake them with just a little bit of butter, agave nectar and a few miniature marshmallows. They are perfectly sweetened and good for you. I always make a green bean casserole using fresh green beans and reduced-fat/reduced-sodium mushroom soup. I put a small sprinkle of fried onions on top and make sure to season with plenty of fresh black pepper. Homemade cranberry sauce is another one of my favorites; it's easy and tastes much better than the canned varieties.



Are there any Susan's Healthy Gourmet meals that are good for the holidays?

At Susan's Healthy Gourmet, we have a delicious carved turkey dinner served with mashed sweet potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, cabbage, green beans and light gravy. It is a customer favorite year-round. We also have a fantastic pot roast meal with all the traditional sides. We serve comfort favorites

without the calories or guilt – all of our meals are portion- and calorie-controlled.

For those who have over-indulged during the holidays, do you have any tips for trimming down post-meal?

Plenty of physical activity during and after the holidays can help lessen any unwanted weight gain. After the holidays, stick to eating healthy and cut down on the sweet treats. A good rule of thumb is to work hard at eating right and exercising for the same amount of time you spent "cheating." If your holiday season started Halloween night and lasted until the New Year, spend January to March working it off and getting back on track to your healthy routine. There are no quick fixes...everything takes time!

For more information on Susan's Healthy Gourmet, visit <http://www.susanshealthygourmet.com/>