

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

December 2, 2005

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu**Dip Into Healthy Eating for the Holidays**

The BIG MEAL holiday is past. I hope you had a fantastic Thanksgiving, with lots of family to share the food with. Now the weeks of office parties begin, the holiday brunches and lunches, open house buffets and all the other food related events leading up to Christmas. This is a harder time, because instead of controlling yourself for one meal it's now several weeks of slow torture. At least you are not alone.

The good news is that most of us don't really gain as much weight as we think we do over the holidays. The bad news is that any weight we gain is hard to get rid of later, and the older we become the harder it is to get rid of. So, while you're making your shopping lists and planning which dress to wear to each event, put some planning into how to evade those extra pounds. You don't have to use all of these hints, but surely you can pick out one or two that will fit your lifestyle. Any calories you save before are that many less that you won't have to work off after the holidays.

At the buffets scan the whole table before you pick up anything. Check out the dessert table too. If there's a dessert you must have, plan around it. Try to find a friend who's willing to split a piece with you. The more gooey the dessert, the more vegetables and fruits you need for balance.

Then, make sure at least half your plate is covered with veggies or fruit. Choose the veggies and meats with the least sauce. Get a slice of turkey without gravy and the green beans with almonds instead of cream soup. Limit the dressing to just a taste. Take the plain fruit salad instead of the one with sour cream sauce. When you get to

the desserts, take the smallest piece available.

Next, find a place to sit down, on the opposite side of the room from the serving line. If you are sitting you can pay more attention to how much you are putting in your mouth. Standing and nibbling distracts you. Before you know it you've had much more than you planned! And if you have to fight your way back across the room for more you're less likely to do it.

If it's the office pot luck you're worried about, take some responsibility. First, make sure you bring something low-cal and delicious. Second, get involved in the serving. The more time you spend helping others the less time you'll have to eat, and the more that people will remember how gracious you were. Use the same tactics as for a buffet.

Maybe your office has a cookie exchange. Make just exactly how many cookies you need to take, so you won't be able to snack on any at home. Take your share, ooh and ahh over the decorated ones, ask for somebody else's recipe, and pick just one to sample. Pick out another one or two for tomorrow. It is Christmas and time to enjoy, but share the joy. Stop at a nursing home on your way home and drop off all the rest for the residents. Or take them for coffee after church on Sunday. They'll be delighted at your thoughtfulness, and you'll be happy you don't need to walk five extra miles to burn them off.

When it's your party make sure there are plenty of options for all your friends who are watching their weight too. Keep the meats lean. Steam the veggies in broth for extra flavor, and then spray with cooking spray so they shine when you serve them. Make holiday dippers instead of serving chips. Use cookie cutters to cut trees or stars from tortillas or whole wheat pita breads. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray, then

toast the shapes in a 250° oven for 15 minutes or until they're crisp.

Here are two healthy dips to go with those chips. And if you don't tell, no one will guess what's in them! Serve with red and green bell pepper strips.

Holiday Green Guacamole

1 avocado, diced

1 C frozen green peas, thawed

2 Tbsp lemon juice

1- 2 cloves garlic

Process all in blender until almost smooth. Serve with tomato wedges and green onions. Refrigerate until serving.

Snowy Salsa

½ C salsa (mild, medium or hot)

2 Tbsp low-fat mayonnaise

1/3 C non-fat plain yogurt

1 tsp lemon juice

Stir together until blended. Refrigerate until serving.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING