**Twelve ways to survive the holidays healthfully**

**SIMSBURY, CT** **(Dec. 12, 2014**) – The holidays are a festive time focused on faith, family and food. Whether you celebrate The Twelve Days of Christmas, the eight days of Hanukkah, or the seven days of Kwanzaa, all of these holidays culminate in feasts. Not to mention the cocktail and office parties, cookie exchanges and chocolate gifts galore leading up to the actual holidays. With temptation and tradition around every corner, it is no wonder so many people pack on a few pounds before the ball drops on New Year’s Eve.

The Wise Men (well, in this case, mostly women) of the nutrition and food world are registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and dietitian technicians, registered (DTR). The Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics put a call out to their members to share their own personal tips for how they help their patients and clients eat healthfully during the holidays, without putting a bah-humbug in their celebrations. Here are the top 12 tips for how CT Academy members survive the holidays:

1. **Observe the ‘first bite’ rule**: “The first bite of food usually tastes the best, so as you eat, pay attention:  when it no longer tastes magical, put down your fork.  And if the first bite doesn't rock your world, move onto something that does,” recommends Julie Harvey, DTR, dietetic technician at Sodexo.
2. **Don’t drink your calories**: “Eggnog, specialty coffees, mulled wine, hot buttered rum, and Champagne punches can go down easily and pack in a lot of calories from sugar. Limit alcohol to one or two drinks and alternate with a ‘mocktail’ such as sparkling water with a splash of cranberry juice,” says Mireille Blacke, MA, RDN, CD-N, Clinical Dietitian at Bristol Hospital and blogger at [rockgumbo.blogspot.com](http://rockgumbo.blogspot.com/).
3. **Have a ‘pre-party’ snack**: “Nothing sets you up for overeating at a party than going on an empty stomach. Have a small snack before you go. I like to have a snack that has protein and fiber, which can help you feel full and control appetite, such as an apple with a small handful of almonds,” suggests Kristin Tallodi, a CT Academy student member at the University of New Haven.
4. **Bring a healthy dish:** Going to a holiday party or family gathering and not sure if there will be some healthful options? Take matters into your own hands, and offer to bring a dish, such as a vegetable platter with a hummus dip,” offers Beth Rosen, MS, RDN on her blog [www.goodnessgraciousliving.com](http://www.goodnessgraciousliving.com).
5. **Sneak in nutrition:** “Make traditional foods healthier with these sneaky substitutions. For brownies, add one can of pureed black beans and ¼ cup of water to any brownie recipe to replace the eggs and oil. Swap dips high in saturated fat (cream cheese, sour cream) with this easy healthy fat cashew cream: Soak 1 ¼ cup raw cashews in water for two hours, puree with ½ cup water, add 2 tbsp. honey and 1 tsp vanilla and serve cashew cream with cut up fruit,” recommends Nancy Ferriello MS, RDN, CD-N who has a private practice in Westport ([http://www.nutritiontoliveby.info](http://www.nutritiontoliveby.info/)).
6. **Spend wisely**: “Think of calories like an allowance and spend them wisely. Look over the buffet and select a few of the truly special dishes that you ‘only’ get at the holidays, and take the time to savor every bite,” says Teresa Martin Dotson, MS, RDN, CD-N of Nutrition Solutions for Life, LLC.
7. **Pack a Peppermint!** “Take a look around the party room and plan what you really want to eat and drink. When you are finished, pop that peppermint in your mouth. It will keep you from eating and drinking more,” recommends Evelyn H. Gezo, MS, RDN, CD-N, nutrition consultant.

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- 2 -

1. **Don't Forget to Move Your Body**: “Plan cold weather activities and dress warmly for ice skating, sledding, or skiing, for example. Stay active at family gatherings (rent Karaoke or Wii Fit, play charades, go for walks after dinner). It is all about balancing calories taken in with food with calories burned off through physical activity,” reminds Tina Fox Dugdale MS, RDN, RN, CD-N of UCONN Department of Allied Health Sciences.
2. **Forgo the food court**: “Be selective about mall food when holiday shopping.  Bring your own mini muffins (60 calories each), for instance, to avoid mega-muffins that can run up to 700 calories, or pack a protein bar, some nuts, and a piece of fruit for on-the-go energy,” says Pat Baird, MS, RDN, FAND, CT Academy President.
3. **Balance your calories over the course of a week, not just a day. “**If you know you have a big party coming up on the weekend, make a conscious effort to eat healthier during the week with lighter meals, fewer snacks and more fruits and veggies. This way, you can enjoy some more indulgent foods at the party, in moderation, of course,” suggests Heather Peracchio MS, RDN, CD-N, University of Connecticut Department of Extension.
4. **Grab a smaller plate: “**When going down the buffet line, grab an appetizer or dessert plate instead of the larger entree plate. By having a smaller plate, you are less likely to serve yourself extra-large portions. Plus, you'll feel satisfied having a full plate of food,” offers Sarah Bourque, MS, RDN, CD-N, President-Elect, Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
5. **Focus on the people, not the food.** “Try to mingle with people away from the food table and hold a drink while doing so. If your hand is holding a glass, it is difficult to eat a small plate of food. The purpose of a party is really to gather with friends and family, not just to eat,” reminds Judy Prager, RDN, CD-N, Wellfed Connecticut.

“Most of us get into trouble when we allow ‘holiday eating’ to take over our lives from Thanksgiving through the New Year,” adds Sarah Bourque. “Don't have an ‘all or nothing’ mentality when it comes to celebrating. Just because you enjoy one day doesn't mean you have to throw all of your healthy habits out the window. Rather, enjoy the seasonal foods you love on the holidays themselves, but get right back on the healthy-eating wagon the next day. By allowing yourself to enjoy your favorite holiday foods, you don't feel deprived and risk overeating later.”

For those consumers who may need a little help with planning and sticking to their nutrition resolutions, Connecticut registered dietitian nutritionists can develop personalized eating plans to meet your goals. Visit <http://www.eatrightct.org/> and click on the Find a Registered Dietitian link.

The Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics ([www.eatrightct.org](http://www.eatrightct.org)) serves the public through promotion of optimal nutrition, health, and well-being.As the leading advocate of the dietetic profession in Connecticut, our membership includes Registered Dietitian Nutritionists, Dietetic Technicians, Registered, students, and retirees of the profession. Chartered by the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](http://www.eatright.org/), the CT Academy is committed to serving the public in the state of Connecticut, while supporting activities at the national and international level. For more information visit the website at [www.eatrightct.org](http://www.eatrightct.org/).

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