

Christmas SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to survive the holidays without piling on the pounds.

Eat Well to be Well
Nutritionist and Lifestyle Therapist

It's that party season again!



How can you have a great time without either depriving yourself or putting on lots of weight? This *Christmas Survival Guide* will give you some ideas for what to avoid and what fabulous healthy and delicious choices you can make in order for you to look good and feel healthy in January.

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The fundamentals

1.Don't try to diet over the festive period

Set a maintenance goal instead. This is more realistic and much more achievable. This will give you the freedom to enjoy yourself without the feelings of deprivation or the pressure to rebel...

2.Take low carb dishes to parties

Low carb is not the same as 'diet food'. Hosts will love you contributing, and no one need know you are also taking care of your health.



Photo credit: Monika Grabkowska @ Unsplash

3.Normal routine tends to go out the window!

However, make sure you don't forget about yourself and still take the time to plan your food. That way, you will still have the right choices in the house and it will be much easier for you to succeed. If you have a specific health goal, it is a shame to fail just because you don't have the right foods to hand. This is so easy to avoid just by giving it a few minutes' thought and preparation.

The fundamentals

4.Don't go to a party hungry.

If you do, if will be harder to make healthy choices.

5.Make good alcohol choices

Avoid creamy or sweet drinks. Try to drink with food as this will reduce the impact of alcohol (and sugar) on your blood stream.

6.Try and continue with your exercise programme

If your usual classes aren't running, choose other options instead e.g. brisk walks with friends and family.



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7.Be gentle with yourself

If you do happen to overindulge, enjoy whatever you are indulging in and get back on track afterwards.

The fundamentals

8.Drink plenty of water

This will encourage you not to overeat and will also improve how you feel the next day.

9.Watch your portion sizes

Particularly fast-release carbohydrates like starchy carbs and sugar.

10.Have fun!



Photo credit: Susannah Townsend @ baseimage

TOP TIP

Encourage the family to get out in the fresh air with you for a morning walk - it's a great way to start the day and spend quality family time together too.

Christmas Breakfast

LOW CARB CHRISTMAS PLATTER

You can use any combination of low carb fresh foods to make a quick, colourful, nutritious continental style breakfast such as:

1 slice of lean ham (ideally organic), 2 sliced tomatoes with 1 sliced apple or pear, with 8–10 cashew nuts or almonds and a few cherries

1 kiwi fruit with 1 thin slice of cheddar or Swiss cheese, 5 pecans, 5 or 6 cherry tomatoes and 1 fresh apricot

Half a punnet of blueberries or strawberries, a handful of pumpkin seeds, 5 macadamia nuts, sliced cucumber and 1 pear

2 slices of lean ham with 1 oatcake lightly spread with cream cheese, 1 sliced tomato and 2 fresh plums

A large slice of watermelon with 1 slice of Swiss cheese, 1 small apple and a few cashew nuts or almonds

FRUIT SMOOTHIES

Make with 1⁄2 pint semi-skimmed or plant-based milk and half a punnet of fresh or frozen raspberries, blueberries or summer berries. Add 1 heaped teaspoon nut butter and a teaspoon of mixed seeds plus 1 tbsp thick Greek yoghurt for a creamy smoothie.

COOKED BREAKFAST

Grilled bacon, 2 grilled tomatoes, mushrooms and 1 poached egg (add a small slice of wholegrain toast or rye toast if desired)

Smoked salmon & scrambled eggs



Photo credit: Karolin Baitinger @ Unsplash

Christmas Breakfast

QUICK & EASY OMELETTES (2 EGGS)

Bacon & cherry tomato

Lean organic ham with red and yellow peppers

Smoked salmon & cherry tomato & chives

Fresh mushroom and cream cheese - lightly fry the mushrooms in a small saucepan using a little milk and then add 1 tbsp cream cheese. Meanwhile, cook the omelette and then add the mushroom filling, sprinkle with freshly ground black pepper, fold and serve.

Toss a couple of slices of red pepper or tomatoes & cucumber onto the side of plate for decoration and fibre. This is also a good option for a quick evening meal when you are tired and don't feel like cooking.



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Christmas Lunches
The low carb way

Here's a reminder of the basic low carb rules you need to apply to create a healthier plate over the holidays.

QUARTER OF YOUR PLATE: ANY PROTEIN OPTION

HALF OF YOUR PLATE: ALL GREEN AND NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES

UPPER LIMIT ON STARCHY FOODS TO AVOID BLOOD SUGAR SPIKES

Quinoa (65g)
Corn on the cob (60g)
Brown basmati rice (40g)
Wholewheat / egg pasta (40g)
White spaghetti / pasta (35g)
Parsnip (40g)
Pumpkin / squash (185g)
Carrrot (160g)
Swede (150g)
Beans & lentils (150g)
New potatoes (75g)
Sweet / baked potato (60g)
White rice (25g)



Photo credit: Pawpixel.cpm

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Christmas Lunches
The low gl way

TRY TO AVOID:

STARTERS
Bread
Anything in pastry
Sweet dressings

MAINS
Stuffing
Too many roast potatoes
Too many parsnips
Sweet redcurrant jelly
Yorkshire pudding

DESSERTS
Christmas pudding / cake
Sorbet
Cheese & crackers

DRINKS
Baileys, beer, sweet drinks (including sugary cocktails)
Too many caffeinated drinks like tea or coffee
Fizzy drinks & diet alternatives

TRY TO CHOOSE:

STARTERS
Melon & Parma ham
Soups
Smoked salmon & salad

MAINS
Turkey
Chestnuts (good alternative to stuffing and great as a snack)
2 or 3 roasted potatoes
Steamed veg (half your plate)

DESSERTS
Vanilla ice cream
Cheese & oatcakes (small portion)
See low carb Christmas cake recipe

DRINKS
Lots of water
Champagne
Dry wine
Spirits and non-sugary mixers

Photo credit: American Heritage Chocolate @ Unsplash

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Christmas Lunches
The low gl way

TOP TIP

Serve roasted butternut squash and new potatoes instead of potatoes and parsnips.

Make your own cranberry sauce using fresh cranberries, fresh orange juice and stevia.

If your meat is not organically farmed, discard the saturated fat from the juices by quickly freezing the juices and spooning off the solidified fat. You won't notice any difference in flavour.

Ideally, 50% of your plate should be kept for non-starchy veg.

Roasted onions make a great accompaniment to your meal and are naturally low carb.

Use a chestnut-based (rather than bread-based) stuffing.



Photo credit: Monika Grabkowska @ Unsplash

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Christmas Desserts

CHOCOLATE FRUIT & NUT CLUSTERS

- 100g dark chocolate (e.g. Green & Blacks or any other good quality chocolate)
- 15g dried cranberries
- 40g pecan nuts
- 5 Nairns rough oatcakes
- 2 tsp Stevia
- 40g flaked almonds

Melt the chocolate in a glass bowl set in shallow water over a low heat. Blend all the ingredients except for the flaked almonds in a blender until roughly chopped. Add the mixture with the flaked almonds to the melted chocolate and coat through. Spoon into 10 – 12 cake cases for a snack or 20 petit four cases. Chill in the fridge until set.



TOP TIP

These are delicious and a favourite with kids. Get them involved in making them too. Ideal as a sweet treat following your Christmas meal if you don't want a heavy pudding. Or serve with tea / coffee later.

Christmas Desserts

LOW CARB CHRISTMAS CAKE

This cake was devised for Christmas cake lovers who don't want to upset their energy balance - traditional cake is very heavy on dried fruit. Note that because the cake has a low sugar and alcohol content, it will not keep for more than a week but can be frozen.

- 170g pitted prunes
- 115g dried apple rings
- 115g dried apricots
- 50ml brandy or tea
- 1 small apple, washed and grated
- Zest and juice of 1 orange
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon



Photo credit: Kate Lane @ Unsplash

The day before you make the cake, chop the dried fruit into a bowl and pour over the brandy / tea. Leave overnight, stirring as you are passing / when you can.

Line a 20cm deep cake tin with a double layer of greaseproof paper. Set the oven to 160˚C (140˚C fan). Cream the butter and Stevia, then stir in the chopped fruit, orange zest and grated apple. Add the vanilla and spices and beat the eggs in, one at a time. Don't worry if it looks a bit curdled.

Stir in the ground almonds, rice flour and baking powder and mix thoroughly. Finally, stir in the juice from half the orange to start with, adding more if necessary, to make a soft consistency.

Pour into the cake tin and level the top. Tie a double thickness of baking paper around the outside with string.

Bake for 1.5 – 2 hrs until a skewer comes out clean. If the top is getting too dark, put a piece of foil over it. As soon as it is cool enough to touch, put a piece of foil tightly over the top and leave until completely cold - this softens the top of the cake. Remove from the tin and wrap in a double thickness of foil to store.

Christmas Snacks

- Almonds (small handful)
- Cashew nuts (small handful)
- Brazil nuts (small handful)
- Toasted seeds (small handful)
- Celery stick with a 'no added sugar' peanut butter
- Crudités with 1 tsp cream cheese
- Slice of ham with 2 tomatoes
- Half an avocado with oil and vinegar dressing and a few toasted pine nuts
- Tuna, celery, cucumber and spring onion with oil and vinegar dressing
- 6 cubes of feta cheese with 6 olives and a handful of cherry tomatoes
- Half an avocado, chopped and mixed with toasted seeds
- Cup of instant miso soup & 1 rough oatcake
- Hard boiled egg & 2 sticks of celery



Photo credit: Rawpixel

Christmas Snacks

- 30g chocolate covered nuts
- 1 small bar dark chocolate (25g)
- 1 apple / peach / pear / kiwi or orange with 1 tbsp nuts
- Hummus & crudités
- Plain bio yoghurt with berries and xylitol
- Half / small carton of soup
- 6 cubes of cheese with 6 grapes
- 1 punnet strawberries / raspberries / blueberries / blackberries with 8 almonds or macadamia nuts or 1 small plain yoghurt or small handful toasted pumpkin seeds
- 1 small glass fruit juice, diluted half and half with water plus a few toasted seeds / nuts
- 2 oatcakes with a choice of any of the following: unsweetened nut butter / pumpkin seed butter / houmous /smoked mackerel paté / taramasalata / smoked salmon & cream cheese / cheese / ham / cream cheese & cucumber
- Small tub of cottage cheese with 1 Ryvita or chopped apple
- Cheese on thin slice of wholegrain / rye toast with mustard or Worcestershire sauce

SWEET SNACKS

- 2 oatcakes (berry or ginger) with 1 tbsp almond butter / 1 heaped tbsp cream cheese
- 1 mini tub vanilla ice cream
- Protein yoghurt
- Kids' Innocent berry smoothies with small plain yoghurt or 1 tbsp tahini (pulped sesame seeds) or any nut butter
- Baked apple with plain yoghurt & sunflower seeds

Christmas Recipes

SMOKED SALMON PATÉ – SERVES 2

- 200g smoked salmon
- 200g cannellini beans, drained
- Juice of 1⁄2 lemon
- Drizzle of olive oil or 1 tbsp yoghurt to loosen the mixture if it is too thick
- 1 tbsp each of chopped fresh parsley and chopped fresh dill
- Freshly ground black pepper

Simply blend all the ingredients together in a food processor until the mixture is really smooth, then chill and serve with vegetable crudités and/or thin slices of toasted pitta bread or oatcakes.

SMOKED TROUT PATÉ – SERVES 2

- 2 smoked trout fillets, skinned, boned and flaked
- 200g cream cheese
- Juice of 1⁄2 lemon
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp horseradish (optional)

Blend all the ingredients together in a food processor or mash well with a fork. Serve with hot slices or triangles of wholemeal pitta bread and crudités such as carrots, celery, cucumber and peppers.

You can substitiute trout for mackerel if preferred



Photo credit: joycyuen-sharemyfood

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Christmas Recipes

MINI SMOKED SALMON KEBABS

Cut up smoked salmon slices into bitesize square pieces and thread onto a cocktail stick with 1 cherry tomato and 1 slice of cucumber.

CREAM CHEESE, GARLIC & HERB DIP

Combine 200g cream cheese with 100g Greek yoghurt; 1 clove garlic and some mixed herbs. Blend with freshly ground black pepper and serve with sliced peppers.



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Eating out at Christmas

The long season of Christmas parties may make it seem as if healthy eating is out of the window for the month of December! However, eating out can actually be easy if you know what to pick...

Fill yourself up with the good stuff!

Have a starter and a main course, or just a main course, but not a dessert. Avoid any bread, prawn crackers or similar. In fact it is best to ask the waiter to take these things away, thus removing the temptation. Instead, ask them to bring some olives. Try and stick to just one glass of good quality wine and remember to drink plenty of water.

Watch out for hidden sugar

When you are choosing items from the menu, watch out for the hidden sugar and high GL carbs in sauces, pickles and dips. For example, all Thai restaurants do very tasty fish cakes. These are better than things like spring rolls because they have more protein - but other types of fish cakes may have a high potato content so be careful. Also avoid sweet chilli sauces which accompany many Thai dishes.



Eating out at Christmas

Remember, you can order off menu

For instance, if you like the sound of the fish or chicken, but not the cream sauce, ask for it without, or swap it for another method of cooking. Don't be afraid of asking for exactly what you want.

Always order vegetable dishes

Make sure you order plenty of vegetables and salad with your meal and, if you haven't had enough, order more!

Avoid fried food

Choose food that hasn't been deep fried, so go for non-fried egg noodles or a small portion of plain or coconut rice. Wild rice is also a good option if available. Share portions between 2 or even 3 people.



Eating out at Christmas

Japanese restaurants are great

All offer wonderful fish dishes, from Teriyaki salmon to Sashimi. Sushi isn't as good as it includes a lot of sweet white rice.

You're in charge of what goes in your mouth, not the waiter, or your friends.

By the time you get to the end of the main course you should feel satisfied. Most puddings need to be avoided as they will almost certainly be high in saturated fat and sugar. Fresh strawberries make an ideal end to any meal, but if they are not available, a small portion of vanilla ice cream is OK once in a while. If you'd like an after dinner drink, choose jasmine or peppermint tea, which is great for digestion.

