



## 'Tis the season to stay healthy

**One of my friends is inspiring me to stay healthy over the holidays. She is making extra efforts to drink a lot of water and to walk more between now and New Year's. What are some other healthy holiday ideas?**

What a great way to celebrate the holidays — giving the gift of healthy living to yourself.

One of the keys to making it work is attitude. Don't act like Scrooge when you decide not to have that second Christmas cookie. Instead, smile as you realize that you can enjoy the holidays without eating and drinking so much that you become bloated.

Your friend's tactics are motivating in part because they're simple. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Choose MyPlate offers other healthy holiday ideas that don't require a massive effort, including:

- When planning appetizers and snacks, choose crackers that are whole grain. Offer hummus, which is high in protein and a good source of fiber as well as vitamins and minerals. Serve whole-grain bread rolls instead of those made with white flour.

- Water is always a great choice to quench your thirst, and you can dress it up for holiday parties. Get some carbonated water and serve with slices of lemon or lime, or flavor with a splash of fruit juice. Enjoy a cup or two before you fill the wine glass.

- Consider fruit for dessert. Instead of pie, try baked apples with cinnamon and just a sprinkle of sugar, or serve fresh berries with a dollop of vanilla yogurt and a spoonful of granola on top.

- For holiday cookies and other baked goods, try using apple sauce or pureed bananas in place of butter or margarine to reduce fat and calories. Just use a one-to-one replacement.

- If you have a recipe that calls for heavy cream, try evaporated skim milk instead. It won't be as rich, and it doesn't whip or thicken like cream does, but it can be a great substitute in many recipes.

- Prepare two (or more?) vegetables for holidays dinners, and be sure to fill half your plate with them.

- When serving meats, trim away fat before cooking, or be sure to do so on your plate before eating. And go easy on the gravy and sauces: A little goes a long way.

You might not think all of these ideas will fit with your holiday plans. But choose a few. And remember, even if you include healthier ingredients in your cookies, it is best to load up on fruits and vegetables and limit desserts. Small steps can have a big impact and help set you in the right direction for the new year.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*



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**Editor:**

This week's column will be the last for 2014. Look for a fresh look for Chow Line Jan. 9.

This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, field specialist in Youth Nutrition and Wellness for Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of Ohio State's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

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