

Choosing Food Before Unwanted Pounds Find You!

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Fall just entered the picture with its erratic weather and exciting change of pace. That means winter, and the holidays, are right around the corner. You know what that means, let the food festivities begin! The problem for many of us is that we wake up to this reality a little late. After parties are planned, menus selected, food purchased...when the season seems to have us in its tow rather than the other way around.

May I suggest that this year, if you choose, you create a sense of habit before the Trick-or-Treaters arrive, so that your resolve and planning, and CHOICE ABOUT YOUR INDULGENCES, fit with your goals. Please don't get me wrong. We *should* have indulgences, and enjoy good food and parties. And we should be aware of what we're doing at the same time. Following are nine suggestions for avoiding the New Year's resolution of *lose weight, get in shape*.

1. When you're involved with planning parties and food events, consider a healthier eating track. Or even a theme. Let people know you want to make a healthier tradition. How can some of the favorites be modified? Green bean casserole? Use the low or non-fat cream of mushroom soup instead of the original. Use sautéed onions instead of the deep fried versions. Consult the variety of cooking lighter websites and magazines to find other ideas.
2. Gift a gift of health. Plan the parties and family times together with more physical activities. How about a yoga party? Invite an instructor to lead you and your friends through an introductory session. Afterward share new teas, vegetarian dips and crackers, light fruit desserts. A bundled up walk outdoors after a large meal, ice-skating, even charades instead of all the time in front of the TV. Involve the children in creating different ideas.
3. If you don't eat breakfast, start that habit NOW. Eating a well-balanced breakfast decreases your likelihood of overeating at lunch by nearly 50%.
4. Don't skip meals, even if you have eaten too much at the prior meal. Try eating 5 smaller meals throughout the day, planned, not as spur of the moment snacking opportunities, to keep your energy higher and hunger at bay.
5. Examine your emotional connection to food. Do you have an entanglement? If so, look deeper to see what need you have that the food is serving. A need for celebration? Call up some friends, indulge in other, safer ways like a movie, indulge in a magazine you have wanted to explore. Do you eat when you are depressed or anxious? Take a walk, take a brisk walk, call up some other friends.
6. Pay attention to portions. Indulge in your favorite dessert- just take half the amount you would normally take. Or if you are served food in a restaurant, immediately divide it in half and ask for a take home box to put it out of sight. Saves money too.
7. Be aware of alcohol. Alcohol in moderation is fine for most people who like to drink, but it has a couple of unpleasant effects when trying to manage food. Alcohol has "empty" calories; that is, it does not contribute positively to our nutritional state. Alcohol also has a tendency to lower our inhibitions; making it more likely we'll eat that second éclair "because I deserve it, really."
8. Honor the food pyramid. Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables and whole grains.
9. Enjoy what you eat. If you are going to give in to an indulgence, because, after all, holidays and parties are a natural time for such things, have the very best that you can afford. Make your indulgence special, not something that you do everyday, but something that you will remember, with pleasure.