

# HOLIDAY TREATS THAT WON'T BREAK YOUR BELT!

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The holidays are a time of celebration and spending time with friends and family, but they can be difficult for diabetics. Since so many traditional holiday foods are high in carbohydrates and loaded with sugar, you may think there is no way to keep your blood sugar levels stable throughout the holiday season. But believe it or not, you can enjoy the holidays without worrying about spiking blood sugars! Try substituting some of these foods instead of your usual holiday fare to keep your blood sugar levels under control and you feeling good! And don't forget that planning ahead is a great diet strategy—try to decide in advance what you will eat at your celebrations and when you will get in your exercise during the busy holiday season.



Make a large batch of winter vegetable soup, and have a small bowl before your main holiday meals. Add spinach, broccoli, kale, carrots, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and any other non-starchy vegetables that look good at the market. Aside from all the vitamins and minerals, you'll be getting some much needed fiber for very little calories and carbs! Plus it will keep your hunger level in check so you can make better decisions at the big meal!

- Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté about 3 minutes. Stir in vegetables and sauté until tender. Add vegetable broth, cover soup and bring to a boil. Decrease heat to medium-low and gently simmer, stirring occasionally for about 30 minutes.

Cranberries are a great addition to your holiday meal and are full of antioxidants. But, many cranberry dishes are loaded with sugar. To be sure that you can enjoy the ones at your holiday meal, offer to bring a sugar free cranberry sauce:

- Combine 2 cups of fresh cranberries, ¼ cup of raisins, 6 ounces of frozen 100% apple juice and ½ teaspoon of grated orange rind, and simmer until cranberries are popped.

If you're craving something creamy, try mashed, baked pumpkin with cinnamon, and grated apple. Pumpkins are loaded with beta-carotene, an antioxidant that may protect against heart disease and certain cancers. Plus the fiber in the pumpkins and the apple will help to keep your blood sugar level stable. Top the mash with chopped, toasted walnuts for extra crunch and heart healthy fats!

- Cut a medium sized pumpkin into pieces, wrap in foil and bake at 350 degrees until soft. Scoop pumpkin out of skin and mash. Mix with 1 peeled and grated apple, and a sprinkle of cinnamon. Scoop into ramekins and top with 2 tablespoons of chopped, toasted walnuts. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Barley has one of the lowest glycemic index of any grain, so why not try to incorporate it into your holiday meals? Cooking the barley in stock (chicken or vegetable) with onions and garlic, adds tons of extra flavor without extra calories!

- Sauté half of a diced onion, and a chopped garlic clove in 2 tablespoons of olive oil until soft. Add 1 cup of barley and 3 cups of stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer. Cook about 45 minutes or until barley is tender.

Instead of apple pie, try a baked apple with cinnamon and chopped walnuts. It's higher in fiber, lower in fat, and the walnuts provide a healthy dose of omega-3 fatty acids.

- Scoop out core of apple from the top, leaving a well. Stuff with 1 teaspoon of chopped walnuts. Place in small baking dish and sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes.

If you're craving cookies try going the homemade route. Cut the sugar in the recipe by  $\frac{1}{2}$  and add in extra nutmeg, cinnamon and/or vanilla for added flavor. Or have a low fat, bran muffin made with apple sauce (for extra "holiday spice" add nutmeg as well as cinnamon!)

- Stir together 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups flour, 2 tablespoons of sugar (or sugar substitute), 2 tablespoons of ground flaxseeds, 1 tablespoons of baking powder and  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of salt. In separate large bowl combine 2 cups Kellogg's All-Bran cereal and 1/4 cups of skim milk. Let stand for 2-3 minutes. Add 2 egg whites and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chunky applesauce and

mix well. Add flour mixture and stir until combined. Spoon into 12 2 1/2 in. muffin tin cups with liners. Bake in preheated oven at 400 for approximately 20 minutes.

Remember that many holiday drinks are loaded with calories and sugar. Stay away from the traditional eggnog and hot chocolate, and try sipping on eggnog flavored tea, or sugar free hot chocolate made with skim milk. Spiced tea will also help you get in the holiday spirit. Plus it will warm you up, help curb cravings, and provides antioxidants!

- Add a cinnamon stick and 1 teaspoon of whole cloves to cold water. Bring to a boil and pour over a tea bag. Steep for 5 minutes and strain. Add a squeeze of lemon if desired.

Also remember that not every holiday needs to be about food. Consider the time spent with your family and friends, picking out gifts for loved ones and special holiday activities "treats" that are better than any food item!