



# HABITS TO HELP KEEP THE FESTIVE BULGE AWAY

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With the festivities in near sight, work becomes less, and the holidays we have so been looking forward to finally become a reality. We are ready for a season of delicious foods, drinks and overindulgence as we relax with family and celebrate Christmas and New Year. While treats and special occasion foods can add variety and enjoyment to our diets, these diet changes eventually add up and before we know it our clothes seem to fit tighter and we seem a little bigger. That doesn't have to be the case this year – with a little bit of focus and planning you can keep the festive bulge away.

## CELEBRATION STATION

Food plays an important and necessary part of our lives. We eat food for many different reasons, not just because it is delicious. Food brings happiness, it unites people and is often used in celebrations. Food gives us common ground, it is cultural and is traditional<sup>1</sup>. The smell of food is also so powerful in that it can bring back memories or events from the past. Enjoying food with loved ones is a celebration we just need to do so with mindfulness.

### 1. Plan your drinks

Alcohol is high in calories, too many calories will result in weight gain. Plan during the holiday season or before arriving at a dinner party. Here are a few strategies<sup>1,2</sup>:

- Allow yourself to have your first drink at a certain time – let's say you don't drink before 18H00.
- Have your first drink when dinner is served - often we mindlessly sip on our drinks while chatting away with friends and family and before you know it half the bottle of wine is done, and you haven't even had dinner yet.
- Only top up your drink once it is done – this helps you keep track of what you have consumed.
- Set a limit for yourself before arriving and stick to it.
- Alternate your alcoholic drinks with diluted fruit juice, water, soda water or diet soft drinks.
- To keep your sugar intake down, switch sugar sweetened drinks for diet options, or better still, water.
- Lastly you can choose alcoholic beverages that are lower in calories like whiskey and water and wine vs. ciders and cocktails<sup>3</sup>.



## 2. Eat before going out

There is nothing worse than pitching at a function with a growling tummy. If the food is served late you will want to dish up double the amount and if finger foods are served you will fall into the trap too. The temptation to shove lots of yummy treats into your mouth is just too hard to resist<sup>2</sup>. Drink a glass of water and eat something small before heading out. A meal that contains protein will help keep you fuller for longer. Have a small yoghurt, a FUTURELIFE® High Protein LITE SmartBar, 30g lean biltong, a handful of nuts or a slice of a low GI bread such as FUTURELIFE® Smart Bread™ with peanut butter.

## 3. Not all finger foods are created equal

Having a strategy when it comes to platters will help you keep your calories on track.

- Look for platter options that contain lean proteins, such as meat balls, chicken, prawns, lean meat skewers, sushi and frittata<sup>2</sup>.
- If choosing fried and pastry options do so with caution.
- Choose veggie options and healthy dips such as hummus.
- If cheese is your thing, focus on quality rather than quantity, and consciously cut thin slices. Cheese is high in calories. Choose whole-wheat crackers and have half at a time.

## 4. Restaurant picks

Often restaurant dishes portions are massive. We can easily eat our whole day's calorie content in one sitting. Eating out can still be enjoyed – just make a few adjustments<sup>3</sup>:

- Stick to one to two courses that's more than enough. It would be even better to have a main and share the starter or dessert.
- Choose lean meat options and a salad or veggies, skip the chips.
- Choose smart sides: steamed rice, baked potato, stir fry veggies.
- Take your sauces on the side, this includes salad dressing.
- If taking a pasta choose one that isn't cream based, example tomato-based option.
- Order a salad with your pizza, eat half and the rest can be taken home.
- If having a burger, eat only half the bun and take a smart side.
- Choose grilled options without a batter.

## 5. Portion control



All foods can fit if correct portion control is implemented every day. There are many tools that teach us about portion control. Follow this link for more details: <http://futurelife.co.za/all-about-portion-control/>. Other useful tips include dishing into a small plate, don't have seconds and stop eating when you are full.

## 6. Desserts for the win

If you have a sweet tooth, that's fine, don't deprive yourself perhaps offer to share or have a smaller portion. If you have a choice choose fruit-based options such as fruit salad or sorbet<sup>5</sup>. Added sugars in foods are a source of "empty calories", they provide us with energy but offer minimal nutritional health benefits.

## CONCLUSION

Applying a few new nutrition tactics can help you keep your groove these holidays. Small changes are a great start and before you know it, you will have learnt some healthy habits that will help you enter the new year feeling great. The best part of it all is that these habits will become a part of your everyday life and you can enjoy moments and food without too much to worry.

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## REFERENCES

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