

Holiday eating ideas offered

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Holiday parties and dinners can bring lots of good cheer and favorite treats to eat. Unfortunately they also can bring unwelcome pounds.

It's the most difficult time of the year for anyone trying to lose weight—or simply avoid gaining weight. It sometimes seems safer to eat the table decorations than holiday meals and party offerings.

It doesn't have to be this way.

“With a little planning and by making smart choices, one can avoid packing on unhealthy pounds when eating out during the holidays or at family celebrations,” says Julie Hadden, one of the more memorable contestants from NBC's “The Biggest Loser” and author of the new book “Fat Chance: Losing The Weight, Gaining My Worth.”

One still can enjoy the festivities without gaining weight, stresses Hadden, who offers some helpful tips in her new book:

—Plan ahead: Before attending a party or a holiday meal, plan in advance. Call ahead to find out what will be served so you can plan the rest of your day's calories accordingly. Consider offering to bring a side dish so you know what's in it.

—Eat before partying: Eat a light snack, such as an apple, a few nuts or a lean deli turkey, before heading to a party or dinner. Drink water before eating to feel full sooner. When you arrive, you'll be less tempted to make a beeline for the food.

—Make smarter choices: Consider all food options and choose wisely. Eat at home as often as possible. Avoid appetizers and save dessert for truly special occasions. When in a restaurant or at a big family meal, cut the portion in half and set it aside, so you're not tempted to overeat. Drink water or tea. Calories should come from food not beverages.

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—Move more, eat less: The only way to lose weight is to burn more calories than one consumes. You have to move more and eat less. Even during the holidays. Walk to the mailbox. Do five laps around the living room during commercial breaks. Take the stairs. Exercise with the kids.

—Get back on the horse: Everyone slips at some point. If you eat too much at a holiday meal, make a fresh start right away and get back on a diet.

—Get inspired: Find an inspiring image and focus on it daily. Maybe it's an old photo from your fitter days, a starlet's behind or torso you wish to emulate, or that dress you want from the store. When vying for transformation, keep an image of victory in mind.

"If you were headed to the mall to buy a new purse or TV, you would research how much it would cost. Take the same care with food. Spend a hundred calories as wisely as you would a hundred dollars," she says.