



## Celebrate the Holidays **WITHOUT** Over Eating!

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Many people will make a resolution at the beginning of 2012 to lose weight. Wouldn't you like to start the New Year without the added weight associated with celebrating the holidays? Many of us notice that we gain weight over the holidays and resolve to lose weight every January 1, by eating healthy and increasing exercise. Some reports say "seasonal weight gain" is expected. Not everyone agrees, including the National Institutes of Health. A survey of 200 adults by the National Institutes of Health, as reported in a Consumer Reports Health Blog in December 2009, found the average weight gain between Thanksgiving and New Years day was less than a pound, even though most participants estimated they had gained much more. (Consumer Reports Health Blog- December 11, 2009)

As a Registered Dietitian, I have to say that this report doesn't reflect reality for most of us. Holidays at any time of the year provide us with an abundance of foods that we don't usually eat. My family looks forward to pies, cookies and other desserts that are only served during the winter holidays. Your family may have traditions involving food as well. Not all food traditions are high in calories, but if you overeat, you are likely to gain weight. We are invited to parties and celebrations, and our work places are filled with goodies as well, usually chocolate. In addition to overeating and eating high calorie foods, alcohol intake

whether wine, beer or cocktails can significantly increase calorie intake.

So, how do we celebrate the holidays without gaining weight? Google this question and you will see many suggestions including eating at home before a party, limiting alcohol, preparing low calorie substitute recipes and others. This article will probably not make the first page of results in Google or another search engine, but I hope you'll find one or two suggestions to plan a guilt free holiday season. A variety of foods at holiday celebrations can provide the opportunity to sample high calorie foods without overeating.

- Using smaller plates and cups at buffet lines helps to limit the size of food portions and provide serving alternatives for your guests.
- Instead of the traditional finger sandwiches, serve platters of thinly sliced turkey, chicken, roast beef, or ham and an assortment of cheeses with pita bread, wraps or sandwich rounds in half size portions. Whole grain crackers may be served as well. Be sure to include sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, shredded lettuce and other vegetables for a satisfying mini sandwich.
- Replace the chocolate fountain with an assortment of dipping sauces in small dishes of low fat flavored yogurt, sweet and sour sauce, and other spicy sauces, including dark chocolate. Don't skimp on flavor just because you're cutting back.

- Your guests can have a selection of cut up fruits and vegetables to choose from. Make your own centerpiece of fruit or vegetables on sticks similar to the popular fruit bouquets. Frozen fruits can add sparkle to your presentation and guests may even enjoy a summer camp special- frozen chocolate and banana treats.
- For beverages, use 100% fruit juices, sugar free Kool-Aid or Crystal Light made with sparkling water, instead of soda for punch. Pineapple, cranberry or grape juice make excellent ice cubes. Splenda can be used for sweetening instead of sugar in Kool-Aid and sparkling water can add the fizz.
- Add sliced up fruit to the punch instead of ice cream or sherbet for added flavor. Use smaller cups or the old fashioned cups that use to come with punch bowls for serving. Use unsweetened mixers with alcohol to limit calories.
- A variety of desserts can be served in small cupcake cups, as most people want just a taste anyway.
- Avoid all or nothing thinking. Overeating once is not an excuse to continue doing so. Get adequate rest, as stressed and exhausted people tend to eat and drink more. Savor your food and eat slowly.

Make a plan for the holidays, enjoy the time with family and friends, and your resolution can be to continue healthy food choices in the New Year.

*Recipe on back*

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A close-up photograph of a piece of Walnut Date Bread. The bread has a golden-brown, crumbly texture with visible dark spots, likely from the dates and walnuts. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

## Walnut Date Bread

### Ingredients:

2 cups All Purpose flour (To make it high fiber, you can use 1 cup of All Purpose Flour, ½ cup whole wheat flour, ½ cup of soy flour, 2 tbsp. of ground Flaxseed)

1 ½ cup Brown sugar

¾ cup Canola oil

1 tsp Baking soda

6 large eggs

100 gm (3.5 oz.) pitted dates (finely chopped)

60 gm (2 oz.) Crushed walnuts

½ tsp vanilla essence

### Method:

- Sift flour and baking soda with a sieve at least 3 times.
- In a separate bowl, beat sugar and oil for 2 minutes using an electric egg beater. When the mixture is lighter, add eggs one by one. Beat each time thoroughly. Approximately it will take 5 minutes to beat all 6 eggs.
- Fold in the flour into the egg mixture gradually and then add vanilla essence.
- Finally dust crushed walnuts and chopped dates with some flour. Add this to the mix.
- Grease and dust the baking pan and pour the mixture. Garnish halved or crushed walnuts over the cake mixture.
- Pre-heat the oven at 350 F. Bake it for 35-40 minutes.

Enjoy and share this bread with your family and friends in this festive season!!