

Cozy Comfort

Food

December 8th &
December 10th

National Nutrition Month

The holidays wouldn't be the same without your favorite comfort food dishes. Here are some healthy alternatives to some of our common holiday favorites:

Ask the Dietitians:

Q: Is coconut oil healthy to cook with?

A: According to the International Food Information Council Foundation coconut oil may be beneficial in improving cholesterol and lowering waist circumference. However, a different coconut oil was used that is not seen in most generic coconut oils found in the grocery store. According to Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, intake of saturated fat such as coconut oil, is still up to debate. Why is it up for debate? Research has yet to show that use of coconut oil over polyunsaturated fats like olive oil is actually beneficial. The current recommendations are to limit saturated fat intake, including that from coconut oil.

Q: What recommendations do you have about High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS)?

A: HFCS intake has not shown differences in body weight or glucose response compared to other sugars, such as honey and table sugar (sucrose). An increase in triglycerides has been seen in study participants regardless of sugar type consumed. In the body, fructose bypasses the regulatory step of glycolysis, which can lead to elevated triglycerides and potential weight gain. In conclusion, there is no evidence showing that HFCS is worse than other sugar.

References:
doi:10.1016/j.jada.2011.03.033; Raatz et al. 2015. *epub ahead of print*; Lustig 2010;110:1307-1321

Try these healthy alternatives instead of common dishes served on the holidays

Mashed potatoes → For every 1 pound of potatoes, substitute 1 head of cauliflower *or* Instead of butter, substitute plain Greek yogurt

Why these suggestions? Cauliflower is an excellent way to add extra fiber, vitamins, and minerals to mashed potatoes. When it's ground in a food processor or oven roasted in light olive oil, it actually tastes just like potato-no one will know the difference! Butter and sour cream are high in saturated fat, so substituting Greek yogurt will decrease the fat content but increase the protein content, while also adding calcium.



Candied nuts → Replace sweeteners/sugar with cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, salt or pumpkin spice

Why these suggestions? To make nuts "candied" they are dipped in simple syrup, which is essentially all sugar. The spices listed above add plenty of flavor to the nuts, without adding all the sugar. If you're craving chocolate, dust the nuts with cocoa powder.



Green bean casserole → Sautéed green beans with almond slivers; Sautee green beans in 2T olive oil and garlic, then top with toasted almonds

Why these suggestions? Traditional green bean casserole is high in calories, both saturated and trans fat, and sodium, because of the cream of mushroom soup and fried French onions. The above suggestion is high in mono and polyunsaturated fatty acids from the olive oil and almonds (the fat we want to increase in our diet), as well as fiber. It's easy to add the flavor of green bean casserole to sautéed green beans using the suggestions above, then adding sautéed onions or onion powder, and sliced mushrooms (which are a natural flavor enhancer).

Cheesecake → ginger pumpkin cheesecake

- 1) Replace 2 packets of full fat cream cheese with 1 package fat free cream cheese and 1 packet 1/3 less fat cream cheese
 - 2) Replace 1 container of sour cream with 1 can of pureed pumpkin
- Recipe from: <http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/ginger-pumpkin-cheesecake>

Why these suggestions? Fat free and 1/3 less fat cream cheese taste just like regular cream cheese, but have significantly lower fat contents. Replacing pumpkin for sour cream not only adds natural flavor without any sweetener needed, but also fiber and vitamins and minerals (especially beta-carotene), and decreases the fat content.



Candied Yams → roasted sweet potatoes

- 1) Toss sweet potato chunks in olive oil
- 2) Sprinkle ¼ cup of brown sugar on sweet potatoes
- 3) Roast sweet potatoes at 400 degrees for 45 minutes

Sweet potatoes are naturally sweet once cooked, so oven roasting them in olive oil and brown sugar are is an excellent method to bring out the naturally sweet flavor, without adding high-in-sugar foods such as marshmallows.