

Trim Fat From Your Holiday Feasting

Your body will be every so grateful if, when you sit down to Christmas dinner this year, you trim away fat, calories and cholesterol along with your holiday turkey.

Holiday feasts are typically laden with high-calorie foods that are high in fat and unnecessary protein as well, says Mark A. Kantor, nutrition specialist with the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service. An extra buttery popover here, a second helping of pie, another dollop of sour cream on your potatoes--it all adds up to calories that most of us just don't need.

"Very simply, if you eat too many calories, you're going to gain weight," says Dr. Kantor.

"Most people do tend to put on a pound or two during the holidays."

Consuming 3,500 extra calories will add a pound to your frame. By the same token, losing a pound means that 3,500 calories must be stricken from your diet over a few days. But the more important thing to know, says Kantor, is the source of those calories--did they come from fat or from carbohydrates? Fat, he says, has more than twice as many calories per gram as protein or carbohydrates. You can eat the same amount of fatty foods as carbohydrates, gram for gram, and actually be consuming more than twice the calories! That's why it's so easy to let the calories get out of hand when eating fatty foods.

In the long run, high-fat diets contribute to heart disease and cancer--the two leading health risks for Americans.

So it's clear that fat is one item to trim out of your diet. Too much protein is another, Kantor says. Protein is more difficult for the body to absorb than either carbohydrates or fat. The kidneys work hard to process the nitrogen in protein. A chronically high-protein diet can strain the kidneys and even lead to kidney disease.

High-protein foods often are high in fat as well. For example, foods such as hamburger, cheese and milk are good sources of protein. But they also are high-fat foods and better kept to a

minimum--except, perhaps, skim milk and skim-milk cheese.

Fat is rarely a problem in carbohydrates such as fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain breads. It's the butter and jams, syrups and sauces that we put on top of those foods that counteract their healthful qualities, Kantor says.

"Holiday dining doesn't have to be a pig-out," he declares. "There's no reason why you can't stick to reasonable amounts of food--while also cutting back on calories--if you're part of the food preparation team."

Try these cooking hints to lower fat, calories and sodium in your holiday meal:

TURKEY

Avoid pre-basted and "butterball" varieties which have hydrogenated oil added under the skin. Cool turkey on a rack so that fat will drain off. Order plain or fresh turkey. Baste only in broth or apple juice. Roast covered for juiciness.

GRAVY

Avoid gravies made with butter, flour or drippings. Use broth from turkey; chill or use separator to skim fat. For a low-fat gravy, mix one tablespoon cornstarch and one tablespoon skimmed turkey broth in saucepan. Then stir in one full (Turn to Page B20)

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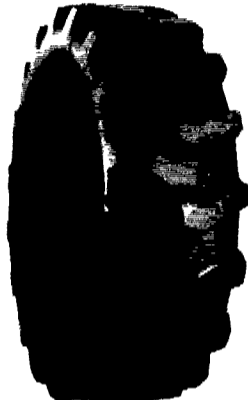
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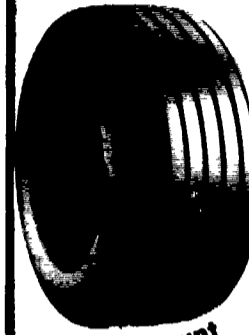
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