



Holiday Gift Guide

Plan Your Holiday Shopping and Entertaining Here

Don't let yuletide overindulgence spoil holiday fun

By Elizabeth Scheibner
Copley News Service

For most of us, the holiday season is a time when healthy eating gives way to reckless abandon. Foods we normally wouldn't consume throughout the year suddenly find their way onto our plates and into our stomachs.

In our culture, food is as much a part of the holidays as Gene Autry singing "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer."

Even the most dedicated dieters succumb to temptation during the holidays, indulging in calorie-laden gravies and sauces, rich desserts and pastries and high-fat dips and cheeses.

The holidays, of course, are not the time to embark on a new dietary regimen. Ideally, you should gear up for the holidays before Thanksgiving. Try to eat smaller portions with less fat.

By the time the holidays roll around you may find that the high-fat foods you used to crave now taste too rich.

The key to maintaining your weight during the holiday season is not to deprive yourself of the foods you love, but rather to think before you eat. Be conscious of which foods are high in fat and calories and limit your intake accordingly.

For example, choose lean meats like turkey and chicken over ham and pates. Try to avoid fried or breaded hors d'oeuvres and opt for healthier items, such as pretzels, raw vegetables or pasta salad.

"Don't deny yourself the foods you enjoy, but be sensible and don't focus on the buffet as being your entire meal," advises Annrose Guarino Thomaston, M.S., R.D., of the Center for Weight Management at Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans.

Before attacking the buffet table, survey it carefully and limit your first plateful to three selections. You can go back for seconds, but try to wait at least 20 minutes (the time it takes to digest) and, again, limit your choices to three. This makes for smaller serving sizes and fills you up sooner without being stuffed. If possible, use a small luncheon plate instead of a large dinner plate.

Another piece of sage advice: Try not to stand or socialize near the food where the sights and smells may pique your appetite. Make a conscious effort to sit down to eat and try to eat slowly, savoring each bite. Ask yourself if you really like what you're eating. If not, save your calories for some-

thing you truly enjoy.

Skip the dessert, which can quickly pack on the calories. If you have a sweet tooth, try hard candy, mints or fruits that don't have the fat content of creamy desserts and chocolate.

yourself to get too hungry or you'll find yourself overeating at the party.

Before heading for a party, eat a small, low-fat snack, such as fruit, yogurt, water-based soup or raw vegetables, which will help curb

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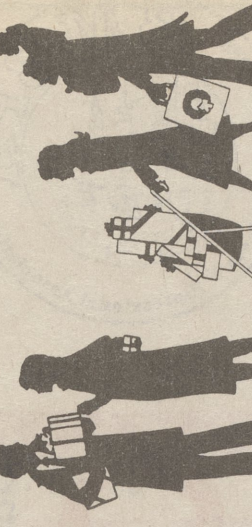
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Don't let safety hazards ruin this holiday season

By Jennifer Planter
Copley News Service

Our adorable bundles of joy, the children and pets in our lives, are our most treasured gifts during the holidays and throughout the year.

But as fun and festive as they are, the holidays present unique hazards parents and pet owners should know about. Holiday decorating, entertaining, traveling and even gift-giving can pose a threat to the safety of little ones.

SUGARPLUM SAFETY

Take care when decking your halls to create a holiday atmosphere that is safe as well as seasonal.

The Christmas tree may be the most beloved decoration, but it is also a source of fascination for young children. Anchor the tree so it can't tip over on ambitious toddlers or pets, or display it completely out of their reach. It's also a good idea to choose unbreakable ornaments, rather than easily shattered glass ones, and make sure any tinsel is not made of lead, which can cause poisoning.

Check all light strands for damage and exposed wiring and keep the tree watered so it does not dry out prematurely. A dry tree ignites more easily and increases the risk of a fire that would endanger the entire family. And remember never to leave candles burning in an empty room, or a child unattended in a room with a burning fire — however cozy!

Keep poisonous seasonal plants like holly and mistletoe out of the reach of youngsters, or choose harmless silk versions for decorating. Finally, latex balloons are a leading cause of infant death, so opt for sturdy Mylar, or skip the balloons altogether during the holidays and year-round.

FEARLESS FESTIVITIES

The fun but hectic nature of entertaining presents risks for children who may not be supervised as closely as usual.

If young children will be present at a gathering, refrain from serving foods that can cause children under 4 to choke — nuts, hard candy, cocktail wieners, popcorn and grapes, for example. And never leave alcoholic drinks within reach of youngsters.

Keep in mind that tablecloths can be reached and pulled by toddlers, so do not use them on a table

laden with hot food and beverages — or anything else you'd like to keep in one piece.

If there is a swimming pool in the back yard, prevent a tragic drowning by making sure it is covered or gate-guarded with child-safety devices. It doesn't take a child long to wander off from a festive gathering and toward the water.

When choosing gifts for children, remember that it's best to buy toys that are age appropriate. Check the box for guidelines and try to adhere to them closely. Toys with small, removable parts are a choking hazard for children under 4.

And toys or clothing (such as jackets) with long strings or cords, including necklaces, can cause strangulation.

For older kids, avoid toys with sharp points or edges and dart guns that could be used to fire other, more dangerous objects. All toys with wheels, including bikes, in-line skates and skateboards should also come with all the safety gear — approved helmets, wrist

guards and knee- and elbow pads. Once the packaging has been opened, tie up and throw away all plastic immediately to ensure that young children do not smother when attempting to play with it.

PROTECT YOUR PETS
Remember that curious cats or dogs may also be attracted to fragile ornaments and dangerous tinsel on a festive tree, so hang them out of their reach or not at all. And cat owners should know that the oils in poinsettias are toxic to their feline friends, so choose alternatives for

its diet.

If traveling with a pet, remember to bring its food along to avoid a sudden, and upsetting, change in its diet.

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