

Holiday Healthy Eating

If you're like many other busy people these days, the Christmas holidays may be the only time you bake desserts. So, how do you bake up healthy, delicious sweets for every member of your family?

Only Bake Desserts Once a Year? Five No-Fuss Tips to Bake Up Healthy Holiday Desserts



Don't over-substitute

Instead of baking rich, creamy desserts with low-fat or fat-free commercial alternatives, simply bake desserts that are naturally low in fat. Try baked fruit, like baked apples or pears topped with cranberries and nuts. Alternately, try meringue cookies made with egg whites and sugar, suggested by Lauren Chattman, author of the new book *The Baking Answer Book*.

Take advantage of natural sweetness

To cut down on fat, take advantage of the natural sweetness of fruit. Using mashed banana, for instance, can help you drastically cut the use of oil in a muffin recipe. In the cookbook *Icebox Desserts*, the author is passionate about flavor building. Instead of baking a layered cake, why not bake an aromatic banana walnut bread that has complex flavor and texture while low in fat.

Start using cocoa powder and buttermilk

In place of traditional baker's chocolate chips, its highly recommends using cocoa powder. Cocoa powder offers intense flavor without the fat. And don't be fooled by the name of buttermilk; it's not made with butter at all. Buttermilk is naturally low in fat, with only 1/10 the calorie content of heavy cream. Buttermilk has an acidic component too, making the dessert fluffy and light.

Shy away from commercial mix

Commercial whipped cream, pudding mix, and jello mix have mysterious chemicals you may not know how to pronounce. "Whip your own cream; make your own gelatin dessert. You'll be amazed how they taste so different,"

Use your freezer

For richer desserts like chocolate chip cookies, simply make smaller portion and freeze the remaining dough.

The Bottom Line

Whether you are an avid baker or a seasonal baker, nothing beats a homemade dessert enjoyed in the company of loved ones. We at HealthCastle.com wish you a happy holiday.

Dessert Is Not Off Limits Because You Have Diabetes



We all know that people with diabetes work hard to keep their blood sugar under control. They often feel that they can never stray from their daily routines or have sweets as part of their diets. However, many people with diabetes still crave sweets and end up feeling guilty about eating them.

Although the holidays are over, Valentine's Day is just around the corner and the lure of chocolate and other sweets can be even higher at this time of year. To stay on top of diabetes management and keep that sweet tooth happy at the same time, try the following suggestions:

5 Simple Tips to Keep Your Sweet Tooth Happy

Choose low fat or fat-free sweets.

Fat-free vanilla yogurt and fat-free chocolate pudding are healthy examples of sweet foods that are low in calories. Remember to check the labels for carb content because all products are not created equal (1 carbohydrate serving is equal to 15 grams).

Angel food cake, sponge cake, and cream puffs are examples of other great tasting alternatives to high-sugar desserts. And bite-sized versions of brownies and cheesecakes can be found in the frozen section at grocery stores. Don't let their small size fool you: these desserts still pack in a lot of flavor and can give just the right amount of sweet taste to satisfy your craving.

Aim for more fruit!

Fruit is a sweet source of vitamins and fiber that is also lower in calories than other desserts. You can top fruits with sugar substitutes like Nutrasweet or Splenda for an extra touch of sweetness. Top a bowl of strawberries with some fat-free whipped cream for a delicious snack that can be part of a healthy diabetes diet. Remember to count the carbs. (A serving of fruit is about the size of a tennis ball or ½ a cup of cut fruit, which equals 15 grams of carbohydrate.)

Beware of “sugar-free” items.

If it sounds too good to be true, it just might be. Many chocolates, candies, and cookies are advertised as sugar free, but they still may contain calories and carbs. And sometimes sugar alcohols (low calorie artificial sweeteners) are used instead of sugar to lower the carb content of foods.

Gelatin, hard-candies, and gum are often truly carb- and calorie-free. You can incorporate many of these items into your diet to keep your sweet tooth happy. However, as you might have guessed, it’s always important to check the nutrition label. The carb content will help you decide if the sugar-free cookie is worth the “cost” in carbs. Many times a small regular cookie just tastes better than a big sugar-free cookie.

Have sweet dreams.

A bedtime snack is generally advisable for people with diabetes. A good suggestion is a protein and carbohydrate combination, like milk and cereal, or yogurt and graham crackers. If you crave desserts late at night try hot cocoa made with skim milk. (A tablespoon of cocoa is about 3 grams of carbohydrate, plus 12 grams of carbohydrate from milk for a total of 15 grams of carbs or one serving of carbohydrate.)

Switch ingredients.

Baked goods can be prepared with fewer calories and carbohydrates. Substitute 1/2 a cup of Splenda Sugar Blend for Baking instead of 1 cup of regular sugar (or a recipe calling for 2/3 cup of sugar only needs 1/3 cup of Splenda).

The Bottom Line

Blood sugar control is a major part of diabetes management. People with diabetes do not have to sacrifice their favorite treats in order to be healthy. Moderation is key, with every food group, including sweets. A healthy diet can include the occasional piece of cake!

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Deck the halls, but don't ditch your diet! Stay heart-healthy with seasonal, healthy foods.



Enjoy in moderation.

Is it even possible to eat healthy during the holidays? Yes! And you can do it without a lot of effort.

Grandma's fudge is a family tradition, and your coworker's cookies are calling you from the breakroom. Indulging a little won't hurt — so lighten up! No, we mean that literally. Enjoy holiday treats in smaller portions, make healthy substitutions where you can, and plan ahead for merry meals that are healthy, too.

Include lots of seasonal, colorful fruits and vegetables.

Do you decorate for the holidays with a lot of color? Treat your plate the same way. Fruits and vegetables will add flavor, color and nutrients to holiday favorites. And they help you feel fuller longer so you can avoid the temptation to overeat.

Slash unwanted calories with easy swaps and substitutions.

Learn where excess calories, sodium, saturated fat and added sugars are hiding in traditional holiday foods and beverages, and some easy swaps to avoid them.

From the obligatory workplace parties to family get-togethers, your calendar may be bursting with opportunities to eat and drink outside of your regular routine. Make a plan that will help you resist plowing through the buffet table, like having a healthy snack beforehand.

Sprinkle in opportunities to be active.

Keep the inevitable indulgences in check by staying active. Enjoy some winter sports for a change of pace, or schedule in a quick walk or workout before you head to the next party.