

Avoid snacking pitFALLs this holiday season

Nutrition Notes by Natalie

Fall is in full swing now and I am so excited! I love the sound of crackling leaves beneath my feet. It's hard to believe that in no time at all it will be the time for trick or treaters. October is the signature month that really kicks off the "holiday season". As the days get shorter and the nights get longer a couple of things can start to creep up on us, one of which is our weight. Holiday festivities and the hustle and bustle of the season can create an urge to splurge. This is the perfect time to preemptively strike back and create a plan of attack.

The best way to combat overindulgences such as these is to have some readymade healthy snack and meal plans that will not only be nourishing to your body, but also kind on the waistline. For starters, stock your refrigerator and countertops with fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables. Every week through the month of October (some are even year round) there is an opportunity to buy fresh local produce that is bursting with flavor! It is important to have these essentials around because they are the centerpiece to some of the ideas and recipes I am about to share. This will allow you to indulge in healthy, antioxidant rich foods while satisfying your snacking desires.



Hummus is a simple spread to make and a little goes a long way! It is a perfect dipping sauce for raw vegetables too. Just drain and rinse a can of garbanzo beans (or any other canned bean you like really) and blend with a couple of spoonfuls of tahini, olive oil, and lemon juice. Season with a pinch of ground cumin, garlic powder, paprika, salt and pepper. You can use it as a dip (my favorite way) or as a substitute for condiments like mayo and mustard on sandwiches to add a little flavor, protein, and fiber to your diet. The best part is, if you don't have tahini, plain Greek yogurt works in this recipe too. I love it when I have options. And please, feel free to eat all the raw veggies you want!

Looking for a partner for your fruit or graham crackers? Try a tablespoon of your favorite nut butter. I love a dip for my apples like peanut butter or a chocolate/hazelnut spread if my sweet tooth is getting the best of me. If you are on the go, just grab the individual bags of pre sliced and pre portioned apples at the store. The key with "dips" is you want to portion out the amount so you don't overdo it. In fact, they even sell single use pods of peanut butter that are perfect on the go.

Too busy (or tired) to plan an elaborate dinner? Try these quick fixing dinner ideas. For a yummy tostada, place a whole wheat tortilla on a baking sheet and spread refried beans and a little salsa or hot sauce. Top with onion, bell peppers, sliced black olives and scallions. Then sprinkle cumin and fresh cilantro and bake at 350 for about 10 minutes.

Need some protein or a quick appetizer for a party? Place one pound of turkey meatballs in a slow cooker with 12 ounces of chili sauce, 2 cups of cranberry sauce (or any jam preserve), and a splash of water. Cook on high for 1-2 hours or until the meatballs hit 165 degrees and garnish with scallions.

How about a veggie pasta dish? Cook a pot of noodles in boiling water while using a steamer basket on top to cook up some vegetables. Strain both the pasta and the vegetables and mix them together with a dab of pesto or just give them a toss in some olive oil and top with fresh grated parmesan cheese.

So, get ready, set, and be prepared for the holiday season armed with a weekly menu, fresh fruits and veggies, and a dipping spread or two. It will help quiet your internal eating monster and avoid holiday pitFALLS (pun intended).