

Avoiding the "Senior Sixteen" (Ounces Of Weight Gain)

Conventional wisdom held that Americans gained five pounds a year every holiday season, and often more; but it wasn't until about 25 years ago that holiday weight gain was scientifically studied. Researchers did find that we tend to gain weight around end-of-year holidays, but only one pound and not five.

It's still a problem because holiday weight is difficult to lose once gained, so "only" one pound a year really adds up as we age. It becomes even more of an issue for those with higher body mass indices that meet criteria for being overweight or obese. They face the potential of gaining even more than a pound every holiday season.

We do have good news for those in that higher-risk category, though. They're most likely to benefit from weight gain prevention measures, which do include reading the OFA *Nutrition News*. We've got two healthy recipes on the back page, and you can find more at dutchessny.gov/ofanutrition

And we're not recommending strict self-denial while everybody around you fills up on holiday goodies.

Eat mindfully. Slow down and really taste (and enjoy!) your food. This is especially important on special occasions when you don't want to deprive yourself. If you're eating a treat that only comes around during the holidays, take time to savor every bite of it. That makes it far more likely you'll be satisfied with a reasonable portion and won't feel the need to reach for more.

Work in some movement. The holidays are full of special TV programming and sporting events. Somewhere in between the parades and basketball games, go for a quick walk or get on your feet and do some dishes.

Watch the liquid calories. It's not just alcoholic beverages that pack a lot of holiday calories. There's hot cocoa with whipped cream, mulled cider, eggnog, all of them loaded with fat and sugar. If you choose to indulge in an alcoholic beverage, sit tight after one and drink water or sparkling water if you're still thirsty.

Remember to get your sleep. You don't have to push yourself to stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve; more likely than not you'll pay for that on New Year's Day, and that's no way to start a new year. Thanks to modern technology, it's possible to follow New Year's celebrations around the world. London is five hours ahead of us, Paris is six hours ahead. If you're really in a hurry, New Zealand is 12 hours ahead - so you could theoretically ring in the New Year over lunch.

You say you want a resolution? Well, you know... If your mindset is to enjoy everything now and pay the price with an overly restrictive diet come January 1st, you're setting yourself up for failure. Instead, just focus on balancing your choices – both healthy and indulgent – and enjoying every day of the season without guilt or fear of what may be ahead.



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French Wild Rice Vegetable Soup

Serves 8

Ingredients

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 small leek, green and white parts, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 medium (about 6 ounce total) carrots, sliced
2 small (about 8 ounce total) zucchini, sliced
4 ounce mushrooms, sliced
1 teaspoon Herbes de Provence
1/2 cup uncooked wild rice
1/2 cup uncooked brown lentils
4 cups water or vegetable broth
1 cup water***
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, with juice
1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Directions

Heat olive oil in a large heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add leeks, garlic, carrots, and sauté for 5 minutes. Add zucchini and mushrooms and sauté for 2 minutes. Add Herbes de Provence, wild rice, and brown lentils and sauté for 1 minute. Add vegetable broth, water, tomatoes, salt (optional), and black pepper. Stir well, cover, and simmer for about 40-45 minutes, until wild rice and lentils are tender. Stir occasionally. Should make a thick, hearty soup.

***May need to add additional water to replace water lost in evaporation. Should make a thick, hearty soup.

*Recipe by Sharon Palmer, registered dietitian
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Msickquatash (Succotash)

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
6 garlic cloves, minced
2 leeks or onions, sliced thin
2 zucchini, diced
2 cups dried (or one 15-ounce can) lima or other beans
1/4 cup vegetable broth or reserved cooking liquid from the beans
2 lemons, both zest and juice
Sea salt and pepper to taste
1 small handful fresh thyme leaves
(or 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme)

Directions

In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add garlic and leeks, cover and reduce heat to low. Cook unattended for 30 minutes. When you remove the lid, the leeks will still be pale and will have produced a lot of liquid. (This is good.)

Bring heat back up to medium-high and add zucchini. Stirring occasionally, cook until zucchini softens and leeks turn golden, about 8 minutes. If you're adding greens instead of zucchini, add them here and cook until just wilted, about 5 minutes. Add beans and broth, stirring to keep beans from sticking. Grate in lemon zest and add lemon juice and thyme. Season with salt and pepper.

Can be doubled super-easily. Keeps in the fridge for days.

*Source: soulfulvegan.com
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