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## **Eat what you like over Christmas and be healthy**

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Christmas is a time for unwinding, spending time with loved ones and enjoying festive food without guilt. A couple of days of eating whatever you like will not outweigh a year of eating patterns. Eating to nourish your body well is a continuous journey.

In saying that I invite you to think about how you feel after over eating for days, possibly slow and sluggish, probably not the way you want to feel for your holiday time. I want to share with you some ways to enjoy the festive season, eating what you desire and feel good too.

### **1. Purchasing Festive Fare**

Festive food starts appearing in the shops well before Christmas, let's leave them there until close to Christmas. Part of the enjoyment of life is anticipation. If you haven't already been eating festive fare for weeks beforehand, these foods will be special and you can really enjoy them then.

### **2. Make a choice**

When an array of food is on offer, it is easy to think you will miss out if you don't try some of everything. Change your thinking to one about being in control. You will make a choice; which of these foods you would most desire. Eat and really savour the flavour! The bonus is you will feel comfortable after eating, rather than in a food coma and can choose if and when you will go back for more.

### **3. Plan ahead**

What social activities are coming up? When will I enjoy an alcoholic drink and when will I reach for the water? Without a plan, it's all too easy to end up indulging in more alcohol and food than we you planned and have you feeling lousy after. Having a plan helps guide your choices, helping you feeling in control.

#### **4. Quality over quantity**

Think about times you have eaten more expensive foods, you are likely to have had modest amounts and really savoured them. This is a good way to enjoy food in general. The opposite to this is buffet style. By the time you get to the end, the plate is piled, flavours are all mixed and it really is a bit of an epicurean shambles. Go for quality over quantity. Sit down, savour the flavours and you will feel so much better after it. Nothing worse than the feeling of a food coma.

#### **5. Plant foods**

Fresh produce is perfect to include for both taste and health over the Christmas period. To make them special for the festive season go the extra mile with purchasing and preparation. Buy good quality fresh fruit, nuts such as Australian Almonds and vegetables. Roast a variety of carrot types (you can get purple ones!), stuffed capsicums, mushrooms, sweet potato, pumpkin and parsnip with the traditional potatoes using herbs and good quality extra virgin olive oil. Make salads with roasted beetroot, radishes, asparagus, leafy greens, mangos, with summer tomatoes fresh in season. Make salads extra special with fresh slivered or whole Australian Almonds. There are endless choices. Make fresh produce the feature.

#### **6. Choose nourishing nibbles**

What better than having fresh bowls of nuts around, cracking open fresh Australian Almonds or bowls with roasted almonds ready to nibble on. Plan around seasonal produce. Berries and cherries are beautiful festive treats ripe at this time of year with the only preparation needed to simply wash and serve.

#### **7. Give healthy gifts**

Instead of gifts of biscuits, lollies and alcohol when you visit friends and family for the holidays, consider more nourishing foods they can enjoy, and ask family to do the same for you. Some ideas to try:

- A quality bottle of balsamic vinegar or extra virgin olive oil
- A box of cherries, mangoes, grapes, peaches or a combination of these divine fruits
- Natural or roasted Australian Almonds
- Cheeses
- Chutney and other preserves or fermented foods – maybe even homemade

- Ornamental glass jars filled with layers of almonds, seeds, muesli or dried fruits

Without guilt you are more likely to find balance. When foods are forbidden, they become irresistible. Give yourself permission and while others struggle through the festive season you will glide through!

**Simone Austin- Advanced Sports Dietitian**