



15 Healthy Holiday Food Swaps For The Weight-Conscious

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You dedicate your summer to hitting the gym and eating right, and just when you *finally* start to feel great, the holidays roll around. Being faced with an endless temptation of creamy, buttery, chocolate-y eats has a way of throwing off anyone's progress.

But, before you throw in the towel, read on for 15 just-as-good-if-not-better food swaps and recipes, all tried and tested by nutritionists. The only difference you or your guests will notice is the delightful lack of food coma.

Swap 1: Mashed Cauliflower For Mashed Potatoes

"Traditional mashed potatoes are loaded with butter and cream, which can

skyrocket the calories to 250–300 calories per cup. Substituting a bowl full of mashed cauliflower can increase the fiber content of the dish, while reducing calories, carbohydrates, and fat,” says [Erin Palinski-Wade](#), RD, CDE, author of *Belly Fat Diet For Dummies*. (Seriously – Palinski-Wade estimates this swap will save you over 100 calories per serving.)

Make It: It’s super simple! Just steam cauliflower florets and puree in a food processor or blender with a dash of salt, pepper, and a splash of butter, suggests Palinski-Wade.

Swap 2: Pumpkin Parfait For Pumpkin Pie

“While the actual pumpkin in pumpkin pie is healthy, most pie recipes use lots of butter, sugar, flour, and cream in both the filling and crust,” says [Alissa Rumsey](#), MS, RD, CDN, CSCS. Read: Hello, calories and saturated fat. “Make a parfait with Greek yogurt for the same creamy taste with more protein, less sugar, and about 185 fewer calories,” she says.

Make It: Mix ½ cup each of canned pumpkin and plain 2-percent fat Greek yogurt, stirring in a dash of cinnamon and nutmeg if desired, suggests Rumsey.

Swap 3: Homemade Cranberry Sauce Vs. Canned Sauce

“Canned cranberry sauce contains an average of 24 grams of high fructose corn syrup per serving. One serving alone can raise blood sugar levels rapidly, increase food cravings, and convince you to keep eating,” says [Janie Zeitlin](#), RDN, CDN. “Opt for a homemade version to keep cravings in check and feel more satiated.”

Make It: Over the stovetop, mix a 15-ounce package of frozen cranberries with ½ cup rehydrated, unsulfured dried fruits (such as apricots, pineapples and raisins). Add 1 cup water, ¼ cup apple cider vinegar, 1 tablespoon freshly ground ginger, ½ teaspoon cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon cloves. Simmer

ingredients until softened. Once cooled, throw in some walnuts for added protein and monounsaturated fats (to help balance out the natural sugar in this dish, and to keep you feeling satisfied), suggests Zeitlin.

Swap 4: Shaved Brussels Sprouts With Cranberries For Green Bean Casserole

“Brussels sprouts are a nutrient-dense vegetable. Swapping this dish in for a traditional green bean casserole offers more fiber and vitamins (like vitamin C and folate), less saturated fat and no cholesterol,” says [Lisa Mikus](#), RDN, CNSC, CDN.

Related: [Next Step's AppeFit](#) helps reduce cravings.

Make It: Meet your new favorite holiday side dish! Make your vinaigrette by whisking together 2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1 teaspoon lemon zest, ½ teaspoon dried rosemary, and 1 teaspoon spicy brown mustard. Once thoroughly emulsified, pour vinaigrette over 1 cup finely sliced raw Brussels sprouts, ¼ cup dried cranberries, and ¼ cup coarsely chopped walnuts. Toss until evenly coated.

Swap 5: Fresh Herbs For Creamy Gravy

“A lot of people bump up the flavor of holiday meals with thick gravies that can contain a lot of salt and fat,” says Minno. “Instead, opt for fresh herbs that will give you the same bite without the guilt. Some delicious options I like are rosemary, garlic, cumin, and black pepper.”

Swap 6: Greek Yogurt For Sour Cream Dip

You don't have to totally abandon that spinach dip you love. “Substituting Greek yogurt or cottage cheese for sour cream and cream cheese in your favorite holiday dips will help you save big on calories and fat,” says [Kara Lydon](#), RD, founder of The Foodie Dietitian. Plus, you'll score an added boost of protein that will keep you satiated and safe from polishing off the entire bowl, she says.

Swap 7: Dried Fruit And Nut Mix For Candy Bowl

“Leaving candy out as a decoration during the holidays can cause you to mindlessly consume excess added sugar,” says Palinski-Wade. “Swap it out for a bowl filled with a mix of air-popped popcorn, raisins and nuts. This will still look festive and colorful with fewer calories and carbohydrates—and no added sugar.”

Swap 8: Roasted Sweet Potatoes For Candied Yams

“Candied yams are high in calories and full of sugar,” says Rumsey. “Roasting brings out the natural sweetness of veggies, and it’ll save you around 165 calories per cup.” To add even more flavor, sprinkle your sweet potatoes with rosemary or thyme.

Make It: Cut 3 large sweet potatoes into one-inch cubes and toss with 2 tablespoons olive oil and 1/8 teaspoons each of salt and pepper. Spread onto a baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes, or until tender, recommends Rumsey.

Swap 9: Creamed Zucchini Soup For Traditional Cream Soup

“Holiday soups are warm and comforting, not to mention full of butter, whole milk dairy, and starch. Save on calories, not on taste, with this simple zucchini soup recipe. It’s a great way to fill up on lean protein and fiber – exactly what you need to control your appetite and lessen your chances of overindulging later in the meal,” says Zeitlin.

Make It: Sauté 1 onion with a few cloves chopped garlic in olive oil until lightly browned. Add in 3 to 4 sliced zucchini, 2 cups low-sodium broth, and simmer gently until tender. Once cooled, puree all ingredients with an immersion blender. Flavor with basil, olive oil, a splash of vinegar, and a dollop of plain Greek yogurt, suggests Zeitlin.

Swap 10: Fish For Meat Roasts

“Instead of a traditional ham or roast for some holidays, try making fresh fish your main dish,” says Minno. “You can save lots of saturated fat and sodium, while getting a meal that’s packed with protein and omega-3s.” Swap that giant ham roast for grilled salmon, says Minno.

Swap 11: Shrimp Cocktail For Cheese And Crackers

“Though cheese is a good source of calcium, pairing it with crackers made from refined carbs can equal taking in major calories before you sit down for your main meal,” says Palinski-Wade. Instead, try shrimp cocktail for your appetizer. “Full of lean protein and omega-3 fatty acids, a 3-ounce serving of shrimp is only 84 calories,” she says. (Compare that to 100 calories in a single ounce of cheese!)

Swap 12: Simple Spirits For Sugary Cocktails

“Sipping on sugar-filled cocktails, like a cranberry vodka, can add upwards of 45 grams of sugar to your intake throughout the night,” says Minno. Instead, add flavor to your cocktails with seltzer water and lime juice, she says.

Swap 13: Quinoa Stuffing For Bread Stuffing

“Loaded with calories, carbs, and sodium, bread stuffing is a holiday food bomb,” says Zeitlin. “Jazz up your stuffing by swapping in quinoa. You’ll save on calories, and add protein and fiber.” You can also use barley or buckwheat grouts, she says. Any whole grain will do.

Make It: Prepare 1 cup uncooked quinoa in 2 cups low-sodium broth. Sauté 4 cloves chopped garlic, ½ cup chopped celery and 2 cups diced leeks. Mix everything in pan, adding ½ teaspoon dried sage and pepper to taste. For added color and texture, throw in a handful of walnuts and tart dried cherries, suggests Zeitlin.

Swap 14: Baked Cinnamon Apples For Apple Pie

“A baked apple offers the same delicious seasonal flavor as apple pie, but provides more fiber with less added sugar and no saturated fat,” says Mikus. In addition to keeping your waistline in check, research shows cinnamon may help improve blood glucose levels in people with diabetes, she adds.

Make It: Toss 1 pound roughly chopped apples (Mikus suggests Gala apples that have been cored, but not peeled), in 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1 tablespoon cinnamon, 1 teaspoon nutmeg, ½ teaspoon ground cloves and ¼ cup brown sugar. Bake in a baking dish at 375 degrees for about 20 minutes or until apples can be easily pierced with a fork, she recommends.

Swap 15: Light Meat Turkey For Dark Meat Turkey

And finally, the obvious but oh-so-true: “Substituting light meat will save you calories and saturated fat . Also, loading up on protein will help fill you up and keep you full,” says [Nora Minno](#), RD, CDN. (A [serving of light meat](#) is lower in calories and fat, but higher in protein, than a [serving of dark meat](#).)