



December 1, 2003

Dear Colleague:

Somewhere around the beginning of October every year, the holiday eating season shifts into high gear. Displays of Halloween treats gradually give way to ingredients for Thanksgiving feasts, which then morph into piles of holiday baking supplies and chocolate stocking stuffers. In the midst of all this food, is it really possible to be **Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere?** We believe it is – which is why we focus on strategies for enjoying healthful, active holidays. The core message in this month's packet can be summed up in one word – **moderation**.

We expand on the joy of moderation – a foreign concept to many Americans – with **tasty ways to color your holiday healthy** and **fun ways to “take ten” for holiday health**. We have also included, by special request, updated versions of two previous holiday handouts – **holiday comfort foods** and **ways to donate food and nutrition**.

If you do a web search on “**holiday eating**,” the results are an instructive way to explore Americans' thoughts on the topic. About half the results are do's and don'ts from health writers: Do wear tight clothes to parties so you won't eat too much. Do substitute skim milk for cream in eggnog, mashed potatoes, and other goodies. Don't eat anything white (flour, sugar, bread, etc.). Don't eat anything made with more than one ingredient. Don't eat anything bigger than your fist – etc., etc., etc.

The other hits are rantings against the nutrition Scrooges and health Grinches. There are dozens of postings of Craig Wilson's 2000 USA column: “**Thou shalt not skim flavor from the holidays**.” [www.1jokeaday.com/archive.asp?ID=823](http://www.1jokeaday.com/archive.asp?ID=823)

Clearly, neither extreme is the advice that people need to enjoy holiday eating – while surviving the season with their health and weight intact. That's exactly where moderation comes into the picture. Healthy holidays are not about extreme restriction, nor are they about pigging out. Our goal as nutrition communicators must be about helping people find the middle ground – the **joy of moderation**.

**As always, we welcome feedback ~ so, please let us know what you think.**

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**Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere: The Joy of Moderation**  
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**Healthy Families 2003: Common-sense in holiday eating (12<sup>th</sup> in a series of 12)**

Healthy holiday eating is not an oxymoron. You can eat your cake, maintain a healthy weight, and enjoy all the pleasures of holiday eating too. It's all about attitude.

“The key to healthy holiday eating can be summarized in one word – moderation,” say Renee Harris, former chef and current coordinator of Montana’s Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP). “It’s not about giving up your favorite holiday goodies; it’s all about finding ways to fit them in. It’s not about overindulging; it’s all about taking charge of your eating and your health.”

One way to fit in richer holiday foods is to balance your overall intake with fruits and veggies. Most produce is low in fat and calories – and packed with vitamins, minerals, and infection fighting phytonutrients. Eating five to nine daily servings of brightly colored produce is a delicious and nutritious way to stay well (and well fed) throughout the winter cold and flu season.

According to Harris, stress reduction is another helpful way to enjoy ‘everything in moderation.’ Learning how to manage stress helps curb overeating, especially during this hectic time of year.

“Regular physical activity is one of the most effective ways to manage stress,” notes Harris. “And, it doesn’t take hours at the gym to reap the benefits. A short, 10-minute activity break can make all the difference in the world.”

Eat Right Montana, a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges all Montanans to “take ten” as often as possible during the holidays. Take a ten minute walk at the mall before – and after – you shop. Take ten minutes to stroll with a friend or play with the kids. Take ten minutes to throw a ball for the dog – or do a few yoga stretches on the floor.

“Moderation really is just old-fashioned common sense,” says Harris. “And, when it comes to food and nutrition, old-fashioned advice is sometimes exactly what we need. If your mother told you that you should eat your vegetables and go out to play with your friends, she was right on!”

**ATTACHED: *Color Your Holidays Healthy and Take Ten for Healthy Holidays***

# Ten Tasty Ways to Color Your Holidays Healthy

Fruits and vegetables are the perfect holiday foods. As nature's vitamin pills, they are packed with nutrients that help fight winter's colds and infections. As nature's fast foods, they are perfect to eat-on-the-run during the hectic holiday season. As nature's bountiful rainbow, they can brighten any festive table. Unfortunately, only 1 in 4 American adults gets the minimum 5 to 9 daily servings of fruits and veggies for optimal health. Here are ten tasty ways that you can change that – and enjoy all the colors of holiday health.

1. **RED:** Slice a red pepper onto a holiday pizza dinner. Sprinkle dried cranberries into a spinach salad. Stir tomato sauce and diced tomatoes into heart-warming chili.
2. **GREEN:** Toss a festive salad with baby spinach leaves – and lettuce in every shade of green: Romaine lettuce, Boston lettuce, Bibb lettuce and butter lettuce.
3. **WHITE:** Use a cookie cutter to create turnip, rutabaga, or jicama stars for a seasonal vegetable tray. Grab a banana for dashboard or desktop dining opportunities.
4. **GOLD:** Mash Yukon gold potatoes with light sour cream for a favorite holiday comfort food. Bake acorn or winter squash with a little olive oil and brown sugar.
5. **YELLOW:** Sauté summer squash and/or yellow peppers into a zesty vegetable medley. Serve canned pineapple slices as a garnish or a naturally sweet dessert.
6. **ORANGE:** Pour orange juice (calcium-fortified) into a morning juice glass. Peel an orange for a refreshing snack. Stir a can of mandarin oranges into a fruit salad.
7. **PINK:** Enjoy half a pink grapefruit morning, noon or night. Pour pink grapefruit juice into some apple juice for a layered “mocktail” in sunset hues.
8. **BLUE:** Sprinkle fresh blueberries into a bowl of cereal. Add dried blueberries into a healthy snack mix. Stir frozen or canned blueberries into vanilla or blueberry yogurt.
9. **PURPLE:** Put fresh plums or dried plums (lemon, orange or cherry flavored prunes) into a brown bag lunch. Include eggplant in a spicy Asian stir-fry.
10. **Eat the color way – every day: For optimal health, keep your eye on the prize: Five to nine servings of colorful fruits and vegetables every day of the year.**



**Celebrating  
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# Ten Ways to “Take 10” for Healthy Holidays

Holidays are stressful. Too much food, too much alcohol, too much shopping, too many parties, too many people, and even too much fun: it can all add up to feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and completely stressed out. Fortunately, we can change our reactions to the pressures of the season – and keep our brains and our bodies healthy. Here are ten easy ways to take 10 minutes to “de-stress” in the midst of the usual holiday commotion.

- 1. Take a break:** 10 minutes is all it takes. A small break can make a big difference in your attitude. Regular relaxation can also help fight off colds and other infections.
- 2. Take a walk:** Moving for 10 minutes can help you maintain a healthy weight and a healthy attitude. Take three 10-minute walks and your heart will get the benefits too!
- 3. Take a nap:** A good night’s sleep is essential for good health, especially when your days are beyond busy. A 10-minute daytime nap can also help boost energy levels.
- 4. Take a bath:** With or without bubbles, running water is relaxing. A 10-minute bath (or shower) can sooth tired muscles and release holiday tensions.
- 5. Take a call:** It does make a difference to “reach out and touch someone.” Connect with a special friend or family member for 10 minutes – by phone or in person.
- 6. Take a dog break:** Fresh air is good for humans and animals. Take 10 minutes to throw a few balls – and bring some sunshine into your life and the dog’s life!
- 7. Take a child break:** Children have the right attitude toward holidays – wonder and joy. Just 10 minutes with a child can help revive anyone’s sagging spirits.
- 8. Take a book break:** A good book can give you a healthy rest from the holiday hubbub. Put all your lists aside for 10 minutes – curl up with a book and a cup of tea.
- 9. Take a snack break:** Stress often leads to overeating. Sit down for 10 minutes and eat a nutrient-rich snack, like fruit and cheese, half a sandwich, or a handful of nuts.
- 10. Take a music break:** Holiday songs, carols, and hymns are a lovely way to take a break, to relax or to even dance. Try a 10-minute sing-a-long as a stress reliever.



**Celebrating  
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# Comfort Foods for the Holidays

Since the tragedies of September 11, 2001, our world has felt less secure. Threats of terrorism and images of war continue to fill news headlines and broadcasts. As we face the uncertainty of the future, cooking and eating together are among the simple things that can bring comfort and joy to our lives. Nourishment, health, communication and human connections can be as close as our kitchens and our dining rooms. Here are a few reassuring ways to make food and nutrition a central ingredient of your holiday season.

## **Cook together.**

Preparing food is a soothing way to share time and to bring generations together. Talking while you measure, mix, stir, and chop can be a comforting time to discuss important issues and concerns. Kneading bread together can be a downright therapeutic experience.

## **Eat together.**

Make sit-down meals a real priority as often as you can. If you live alone, reach out to family, friends or co-workers – and break bread together. Take time to relax and to eat together at home, at restaurants, or at work. The place is not important, the together is.

## **Take a break from television.**

Even in normal times, television makes it hard to enjoy food. Repetitive images of the violence and destruction around the world can literally make us sick to our stomachs. Take a break from the news – and focus on the tastes, smells and textures of food.

## **Return to rituals.**

Families have many rituals for meals – prayers, a moment of silence, joining of hands, candles or festive touches, like flowers, favorite dishes, or special linens. Making family rituals part of everyday meals ties us to memories of the past – and to hope for the future.

## **Take time to share.**

Slow down and share – food, fellowship, conversation, tears, laughter, and the simple joy of time together. Even small children can learn to be a part of mealtime memories. Give everyone the gift of attention and the time to share what is important to him or her.

## **Invite others to join you for a meal.**

A sense of community is one of the strongest ways to celebrate the special meaning of the holidays in our lives. By joining with others around a table, you can take comfort from the blessings of nourishing food and loving companionship.

**Provided by Eat Right Montana**

# WAYS TO DONATE FOOD AND NUTRITION

The holidays are a time for generosity – and gifts of food are always welcome by those in need. They can shift the focus from holiday overeating – to sharing with those who may not have enough to eat. If you want to make a nourishing food donation this year, there are ideas to fit every wish list and every pocketbook. Here are just a few of them:

## PERSONALLY:

The most direct way to make a nutrition donation is to invite someone to share food with you – in your home, in their home, or at a restaurant. Consider an invitation to someone with limited income, limited mobility, or limited social contacts.

- ✓ **Be a foster grandchild ~ take an older person to lunch.**
- ✓ **Offer to grocery shop for, or with, someone with a disability.**

## LOCALLY:

Local charities are always in need of your donations. Remember local food banks, food pantries, or soup kitchens with donations of money, food, and/or time. Challenge your family, friends, or co-workers to match your gifts.

- ✓ **Donate nutrient-dense foods, like canned tuna, chicken or beans.**
- ✓ **Make a commitment to donate regularly throughout the year.**

## NATIONALLY:

Large national groups support services that local groups cannot provide: the coordination and distribution of large corporate donations; surveys of hunger (almost 35 million Americans faced hunger last year); and advocacy for effective public policies.

- ✓ **America's Second Harvest: Ending Hunger:** [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org)
- ✓ **Food Research and Action Center (FRAC):** [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)

## GLOBALLY:

Solving global hunger problems requires short-term and long-term solutions – immediate food relief in war torn nations and longer-term agricultural support projects. Both types of aid are necessary to bring stability, peace, and prosperity around the world.

- ✓ **Heifer International (livestock and training):** [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)
- ✓ **United National Children's Fund (UNICEF):** [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

## CHECKING ON CHARITIES:

To give wisely, it is important to make certain that charities are doing well at doing good. You can visit local groups personally and investigate others on the web. These sites can help you check out the finances of your charities of choice:

- ✓ **American of Institute of Philanthropy (AIP):** [www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org)
- ✓ **Ministry Watch: Independent Ratings:** [www.ministrywatch.org](http://www.ministrywatch.org)
- ✓ **Wise Giving Alliance of the Better Business Bureau:** [www.give.org](http://www.give.org)

# Healthy Families 2003

Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere:

Taking charge of your eating and your life

[www.montanadieteticassociation.org/promo.html](http://www.montanadieteticassociation.org/promo.html)

January 2003

- Nutrition and Physical Activity, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE!!

February 2003

- Healthy options in the morning

March 2003

- Healthy options at noon

April 2003

- Healthy options in the evening

May 2003

- Healthy options throughout the day

June 2003

- Healthy options at work

July 2003

- Healthy options on the road

August 2003

- Healthy options while camping

September 2003

- Healthy options at school

October 2003

- Healthy options for the backcountry

November 2003

- Healthy options in restaurants

December 2003

- Healthy options for the holidays



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