

NEWS ARTICLE

Jean A. Ince

County Extension Agent-

Staff Chair

November 8, 2021

SIMPLE CHANGES TO HOLIDAY RECIPES

Halloween is over, Thanksgiving is right around the corner and then the holiday parties will start. Family gatherings and other social events make it challenging to stick to an overall healthy food plan. Are there ways to enjoy your favorite holiday foods without all the calories, fat, sugar and salt? The good news is yes! You can make a few simple changes to your favorite foods without sacrificing taste. Here's how...

Look at your recipe and identify what needs to be changed. Has your doctor suggested you limit sodium in your diet due to high blood pressure? What ingredients in the recipe are high in sodium? You can reduce the amount of salt by one-fourth without noticing a difference in taste.

Who doesn't like prepackaged foods? Just zip open the box or package, pop it in the microwave for a few minutes and voila you are ready to eat. However, many prepackaged foods are very high in sodium. Nutrition experts recommend preparing foods from scratch whenever possible to reduce sodium intake.

Canned vegetables are high in sodium. Use the lower sodium versions or drain and rinse the vegetables before using them. To reduce the sodium content even more, use frozen vegetables. They typically have no extra sodium added to them.

When it comes to reducing calories look at the amount of sugar in the recipe. Most recipes can be reduced by one-fourth with good results. Add more spices such as cinnamon,

lemon peel (zest), or flavored extracts such as vanilla or almond for flavor and reduce sugar content in baked goods.

To increase the fiber content in your recipes, substitute rolled oats for breadcrumbs in meatloaf or meatballs. Use whole wheat products whenever possible. Try making whole wheat rolls this year! You can even try combining one-half whole wheat flour and regular flour in place of all-purpose flour.

Almost everywhere we turn, we are reminded to increase our protein intake. Nuts are a good source of protein. Sprinkle them in salads for a great crunch.

Try low-fat or fat-free versions of cream cheese and sour cream to reduce fat intake. Chances are you will not miss the full fat versions. Substitute unsweetened apple sauce, mash bananas, or canned pumpkin for oil, margarine, or butter in muffins, brownies and quick breads.

Instead of flavoring mashed potatoes with lots of butter and cream, use low-sodium chicken broth for a great flavor and less sodium and fat.

Try mixing in dried fruit such as raisins and cranberries in place of chocolate chips in cookies and breads.

Use evaporated skim milk instead of heavy cream in desserts such as pumpkin pie or custards.

At the holidays, we tend to over do it and eat too much. Watch your portion sizes. One of the best things about holiday meals is having leftovers for the next couple of days. Make sure you have plenty of vegetables on your plate. And drink water!

Finally, take a walk around the neighborhood instead of plopping down on the couch after a big meal. If the weather is good, walking is a great way to relax and enjoy the beautiful colors around us.

For more information on eating healthier during the holidays, contact the Howard County Extension Service at 870-845-7517 or visit our office located on the second floor of the courthouse.

Recipe of the Week

This recipe comes from my daughter, Lauren Ince who is a registered dietician in Little Rock. It is a great example of how making a few changes can reduce fat and calorie content. This recipe cuts calories, carbohydrates and fat in half.

An added plus is it can be made ahead of time. Prepare through step 3 of the directions and put in the freezer. When you are ready, allow the dish to thaw completely in the refrigerator. Take it out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before baking while oven is preheating. Complete with steps 4 and 5.

Modified Corn Casserole

1 (15 oz.) can whole kernel corn, drained

1 (15 oz.) can cream style corn

1 pkg. vegetarian corn muffin mix

1/3 cup canola oil

1 cup low-fat sour cream

1 cup low-fat cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a bowl, stir corn, cream corn, muffin mix, canola oil and sour cream until well combined.

3. Pour mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray.
4. Bake for 45 minutes.
5. Remove from oven and top casserole with cheese. Put casserole back in oven for 5-10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Yield: 8 servings

Nutrition information per serving: Calories 334, carbohydrates 41g, fat 16.5g, protein 7.8g, fiber 2.5g