

RESPECTING THE GIFTS OF FAMILY, FRIENDS AND FOOD

Do we really need one more article about eating well over the holidays? Yes! Especially one that points out that healthy eating isn't necessarily the same thing as nutritious eating.

Healthy eating goes beyond preventing heart disease, getting enough of a vitamin, or having a healthy weight. Food plays an honoured role as a centerpiece at holiday time. This is when friends and family gather, share stories, and strengthen or renew bonds.

We feast – not just on food, but on each other's company and energy. So this is no time for a 'diet' mentality. And yet it's also not the time to take life and health lightly, but to respect the gifts we have. How can we eat respectfully, while celebrating and enjoying?

Provide lots of healthy options. I'm a monkey-see-monkey-eat kind of person. If I see healthy stuff, I'll eat it. I've found this to be true of young and old alike.

A platter or two of colourful veggies with dip gives everyone something other than treats to keep their hands and mouth occupied. Carbonated water is a wonderful replacement for some of the pop and juices typically used as a mixer for drinks and punch. Mix salted nuts half and half with unsalted nuts. Keep a bowl filled with mandarin oranges. I could make a longer list, but you get the idea.

Manage the abundance of treats. Once again, the monkey-see-monkey-eat habit comes into play! Have smaller plates of treats out at certain times of the day and put them out of sight the rest of the time.

Since I like to have one piece of everything, instead of putting all of the treat choices on the plate, try putting just two or three out at one time and switching them up at another time.

Tiny servings let us try a variety of treats without overindulging -- over the years I find I am cutting my Nanaimo bars into one inch squares and making smaller cookies.

Eat mindfully. We can get so enthralled by the fun our taste buds are having that we forget to enjoy the evening and the people. If we ignore how our body feels and overstuff ourselves, we can end up regretting it later. I remind myself (and my dad) that leftovers are just as delicious.

Get moving. Try getting involved in cleaning up. Moving around is much better than sitting around after a big meal. It helps with blood sugar and triglyceride levels after a big meal and it gives me a chance to make some plates of leftovers-to-go for the guests.

If you think about it, those of us that struggle with overindulgence at holiday time are so lucky. Enjoy the feast of family, friends, fun and food this holiday season. What a gift to have!