



DINING ON A DIME

Eating Better for Less

December / January

The Holidays Are Merrier with Money-Saving Meals

Saving money is on everyone's mind during the holidays. This issue of *Dining on a Dime* offers several ways to help you get the most out of your food dollars. Be merry this holiday saving money on your meals!

Stretch Your Savings

Plan your menu early. Look in store flyers for pre-holiday food sales.

Delay Your Festive Meal to Get Day-After Deals

The day after a holiday can be a great time to find festive food bargains at the store. Consider delaying your holiday meal by several days to take full advantage of sales. Special-event foods may be marked down to half price. Look for reduced prices on certain meats, such as turkey and ham; baked goods, such as holiday rolls and pumpkin pie; and traditional fresh or canned fruits and vegetables, such as pumpkin. Be sure to check the "sell-by date" for freshness before purchasing any food.



Plan Your Portions

Limit costs by buying only as much food as your family needs. For example, do you want to serve enough turkey for just 1 meal? If so, buy 1 pound per person. Want a few leftovers for sandwiches? If so, plan to bake 1 1/2 pounds per person. To provide for an entire extra meal, buy 2 pounds per person. Each pound of a bone-in ham will provide 2 to 3 servings. A pound of semi-boneless ham will yield 3 to 4 servings. One pound of a boneless ham will provide 4 to 5 servings.

Designate Some Dishes

Inviting guests? Save money and add some surprises to your menu by asking them to bring beverages, bread or a non-perishable dessert.

Compare the Costs of Prepared Convenience Foods

Compare costs per serving. Some convenience foods are money-savers. Canned sweet potatoes and frozen fruits may be a better buy than fresh ones. Pre-baked "brown and serve" rolls can often be found for a low price per package. Similarly for pies, canned pumpkin pie filling mix on sale is usually less expensive than buying canned pumpkin and adding spices, evaporated milk and eggs. Some prepared foods are more expensive. For example, you can make gravy and stuffing inexpensively with foods that you probably already have at home. Never made your own stuffing? Check out page 4 for a recipe for Savory Skillet Stuffing that's easy to make and delicious!

Bacteria ... The Unwanted Holiday Guest

Ever have a stomach ache after eating a hefty holiday feast? You may think that you just ate too much, but it could be a case of food-borne illness. Here are ways to handle perishable foods safely and enjoy a healthy holiday!

Planning Ahead for Food Safety

Prepare perishable foods (those containing meats, eggs, dairy products, and fruit or vegetable mixtures) no more than 1 day before a meal, unless the food will be frozen. For example, assemble a casserole 1 day in advance, put it in the refrigerator, then bake it on the day of the meal, allowing an extra 15 to 20 minutes of cooking time. Similarly, cut up fruits and vegetables for a salad or relish tray 1 day before the meal, then put them in covered containers on refrigerator shelves that are above any raw meat.



Purchase fresh turkey products no more than 2 days before the meal. For longer storage, freeze it. Allow 24 hours of refrigerated thawing time for each 5 pounds of food weight. You can leave a thawed turkey in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Do NOT rinse off the turkey, since that only splashes germs around. Cook a turkey until a food thermometer shows that the thickest part has reached an internal temperature of 165 degrees F.

Protecting Potluck Foods

Travel no longer than 30 minutes with perishable foods. Keep hot foods hot by carrying them in insulated containers, or wrap the dish in foil and heavy towels. Place cold foods in a cooler with ice or freezer packs. On arrival, place cold foods in the refrigerator and hot foods in a heated oven to keep them hot. If traveling for longer distances, take non-perishable foods instead, such as uncut fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, crackers, breads or unopened beverages.



Serving Strategies

Do not leave perishable foods at room temperature for longer than 2 hours, including preparation, travel and serving time. Avoid adding fresh servings to perishable foods that have been sitting out. Instead, replace empty dishes with fresh foods in clean dishes. Serve small bowls or trays of foods with about the number of servings that will be eaten in 30 minutes or less.

Keeping Leftovers Safe

Discard perishable foods left at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Refrigerate or freeze hot foods in shallow containers at a depth of 2 inches or less until cool. Eat all perishable leftovers within 4 days, or for longer storage, freeze them. Thaw perishable frozen foods in the refrigerator or heat them in a microwave oven, but do not thaw them at room temperature. If you thaw food in a microwave oven, continue to heat it until it is fully cooked. Reheat hot foods to 165 degrees F. or higher.

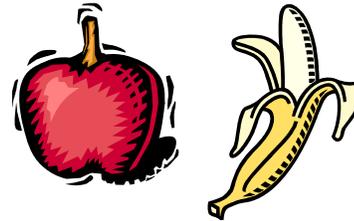


Sources (Accessed 11/24/2014): Adapted from: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, at www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Holiday_or_Party_Buffets.pdf; and www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/seasonal-food-safety/countdown-to-the-thanksgiving-holiday; and www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/a424bdb3-e128-4135-afcc-4f5522a08122/7_Steps_Community_Meals.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

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Managing the Holiday “Calorie Budget”

A popular belief is that most adults living in the U.S. gain 5 to 10 pounds between Thanksgiving and Super Bowl Sunday. Not true, according to research. The good news? The average weight gain during the winter holiday season is less than 2 pounds. The bad news? The amount gained varies a lot between individuals. And body weight gained over the holidays typically is not lost during the rest of the year. So over the years, extra weight accumulates. You can prevent unwanted weight gain! How? Increase your physical activity. And take a look at the calorie “costs” of your holiday feasts. Below, *Dining on a Dime* shows you the calories in some favorite U.S. holiday foods. The suggested alternatives that are more healthful will save you more than 1,000 calories — and may save your waistline!



Traditional Holiday Foods	Calories	More Healthful Versions	Calories
3 ounces roasted turkey, with skin	161	3 ounces roasted turkey, no skin	135
1/2 cup mashed potatoes	119	1/2 cup baked potato	99
1/2 cup candied sweet potatoes	172	1/2 cup baked sweet potato	90
A 2 1/2 inch homemade biscuit	212	A 2 inch square dinner roll	78
1/2 cup green bean casserole	71	1/2 cup boiled green beans	22
A frosted sugar cookie	135	An oatmeal raisin cookie	65
1 slice (1/8 pie) pecan pie	424	1 slice (1/8 pie) pumpkin pie	302
1 slice (1/8 pie) apple pie	296	1 cup applesauce, not sweetened, with cinnamon	102
1 slice (1/8 pie) banana cream pie, prepared from a boxed mix	231	1 cup fresh banana slices	134
2 ounces marshmallow creme chocolate fudge candy	257	1 cup hot cocoa, made with non-fat milk	163
12 ounces regular soft drink	150	12 ounces diet soft drink	0

Sources (Accessed 11/24/2014): 1. [The effect of holiday weight gain on body weight](#), DA Schoeller, Physiology & Behavior 134 (2014) 66–69; and 2. [National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference](http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/), USDA, <http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/>

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.



Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner

Savory Skillet Stuffing (Makes 4 servings, each 1/2 cup)

Ingredients

3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/3 medium onion, chopped finely
1/3 cup finely chopped celery
1 teaspoon ground or crumbled dried sage leaves
3 tablespoons fresh (or 1 tablespoon dried) chopped parsley
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/3 cup chicken or turkey broth
5 slices stale bread, cubed or crumbled

Directions

1. Wash your hands and work area. **2.** In a skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion, celery, sage, parsley and pepper. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until vegetables are softened but not browned. **3.** Stir in broth and bread. Remove from heat. **4.** Serve warm. **5.** Cover and refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Each serving provides: 190 calories, 12g fat, 2g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 16g carbohydrates, 5g protein, 0mg cholesterol, 250mg sodium and 3g dietary fiber. Daily Values: 6% vitamin A, 8% vitamin C, 6% calcium, 6% iron.



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