What do you most look forward to about the holidays? For many, including myself, the answer may be holiday foods. Many families have incredible traditions centered on traditional foods that they only get to enjoy a few times each year. These holiday celebrations and traditions are important and should be cherished. At the same time, you may be wondering how you can make your traditional holiday recipes healthier.

Many favorite holiday foods, like pumpkin pie or green bean casserole, actually start with a healthy first ingredient. By focusing on that vegetable or fruit, you can reduce the large amounts of fats and sugar usually found in our traditional holiday recipes. To do this, consider switching from a traditional green bean casserole to a green bean sauté, from traditional mashed potatoes to yogurt mashed potatoes, from a traditional pumpkin pie to a crustless pumpkin pie, or from a traditional apple pie to slow cooker baked apples. Some of these recipes still contain more calories than we should regularly consume, but they are more healthful.
alternatives as compared to the traditional recipes because they increase the nutritional value and fiber while decreasing the calories, added sugar, and sodium.

With all of this, it is essential to highlight the importance of adapting this based on what is important to your family traditions and culture. There may be some recipes which are important for your family to enjoy as is. If this is the case, consider if you can make just one swap to a healthier recipe for a different item.

To learn more, consider attending my “Healthy Cooking for the Holidays” program at the Erie Library on November 16th at 10 AM. Attendees will dive deeper into this information and practice making one of the recipes. This program is free, but an RSVP is required by calling 620-365-2242.

For more information about healthy holiday cooking, please contact me at clarawicoff@ksu.edu or 620-365-2242.