

Celebrate a Healthful Harvest

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Thanksgiving is a special time to gather with family and friends, share a meal and remember the things in life that are important to us. Gratitude or a feeling of thankfulness has been shown to have a positive impact on physical and emotional well-being. Thanksgiving provides an ideal opportunity to....

Cultivate Connectedness

Lively conversations, laughter, familiar stories. Holidays are a wonderful occasions to draw people together. They are a chance to strengthen ties with loved ones and create cherished memories. Connectedness or having strong social relationships benefits health. This Thanksgiving, consider ways to foster connectedness such as adding new guests to your usual gathering, sharing favorite holiday moments or going for a walk together after dinner.

Make Positive Food Memories

Chopping oranges for the cranberry-orange relish, mashing potatoes, baking bread. Preparing special meals together preserves food traditions from generation to generation. Engaging children in cooking nurtures a positive relationship with food. They gain self-confidence as they learn new skills.

To involve children this Thanksgiving, think about the following...

- Inspire their imagination by inviting children to decorate the table, pick out holiday napkins or help make a harvest themed center piece
- Make planning the menu a family affair. Look at favorite recipes and cookbooks together.
- Encourage children to choose a dish to prepare. Making a special dish of their own to share with family and friends will build a sense of accomplishment and pride; feelings they'll remember for years to come.

Embrace Tradition Yet Feature Nutrition

Turkey, cranberries, sweet potatoes, squash. Many traditional Thanksgiving favorites are nutrient-rich. Give your Thanksgiving meal a healthful advantage.

Offer guests a variety of colorful appetizers such as:

- mini kabobs made with fruit and low-fat cheese
- pepper jelly spread over low fat cream cheese, serve with whole wheat crackers
- dates stuffed with roasted peanuts sprinkled with powdered sugar
- raw vegetables such as grape tomatoes, zucchini spears, yellow squash rounds, jicama sticks; serve with low-fat dip or ranch dressing

As a first course, plan a fruit cup or tossed salad. For an interesting variation, combine the two and serve with a vinaigrette dressing. Red leaf lettuce blends or field greens go well with any of the following combinations:

- apples/dried cranberries/ toasted walnuts
- strawberries/mandarin oranges/kiwis

- grapefruit/orange sections, avocados, pomegranate seeds

Give stuffing a nutrient boost. For bread stuffing, use all or part whole wheat bread crumbs. For rice stuffing, brown and wild rice add whole grain benefits. Dried fruit such as cranberries, raisins, apricots and nuts such as chestnuts and pecans provide additional fiber as well as flavor.

Finally, since the greater the food variety, the more we tend to eat, so avoid a dessert smorgasbord. Pick one or two family favorites to serve.

At the end of the day, the meal may be over, but the thanks-giving goes on.

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