

# It's a Holiday, Not a Holimonth

By: Nutritionist Keith Klein, CN, CCN



The holidays are a great time of the year. It's the time of year when family, friends and visiting relatives can all get together and bond once again. Unfortunately, after the bonding is over and everyone has returned back to their normal schedules, we are faced with the fruits of our labor. It's funny how you never seem to notice the increased weight until after the holiday is over. Maybe last year was going to be different; you had plans to avoid gaining weight, tried your hardest and still found it hard to fit into that new dress you bought at the end of the summer.

Because the holiday season lasts so long, it poses a tremendous dilemma for many weight and health conscious people. During this time of year most people anticipate a

weight gain and for good reason. The holiday duration is longer than any other; it lasts for 2 - 3 months, consider the commencement on Halloween, followed by Thanksgiving, Christmas, the New Year and then Valentine's Day. It's no wonder everyone expects to put on a few pounds. Each holiday seems to be centered on food, which magnifies the problem and makes it more difficult to manage. Although it may seem hard, there are steps that you can take to help reduce your chances of gaining unwanted pounds during the holiday season.

One helpful hint is to avoid starving yourself on the holiday. Do you typically avoid eating all morning and afternoon in anticipation for the upcoming meal? Once you become hungry, the primal instinct to seek food will override everything you know about nutrition and you will more than likely hear yourself saying, "I don't care what it is, just give me food." A better policy is to eat breakfast, lunch and then when dinnertime finally arrives you won't be as ravenous. The end result is being in more control and less overeating.

Realize that holidays only last for one day, not weeks! This will help you feel more control and less overwhelmed. You can choose to let this day be a maintenance day, as opposed to a dieting day. Allowing yourself to have a day to enjoy the food, dessert and wine will help relax you around your guests and not bring attention or social pressure onto yourself. Since your healthy eating habits should be for life, the goal is progression not perfection. Likewise, holiday's and celebrations are a part of the real world and you should learn how to manage them as opposed to letting them get the better of you. By viewing your eating in this manner you will find it easier to relax and enjoy the occasion.

Another helpful hint is to acknowledge that you have choices. Decide in advance what you want to do. You can choose to put butter, gravy and other high fat items on the table but you don't have to use them. You can choose to purchase or bake a pie and then insist that your company take the leftovers home with them. Or, you can choose to bake a pie that you don't like and have a low calorie dessert available that you do like. You may decide that the whole family should eat healthfully and remove the skin from the turkey and offer only low fat choices for the holiday. However you decide to handle the holiday is up to you, but remember to accept the responsibility for your decisions. If you decide to eat junk, don't complain and feel bad.

Every family has their own favorite recipe for baking a turkey. All herbs and seasonings are allowed, so use whatever spices, herbs and seasonings you like. The turkeys that you purchase from your local supermarket are usually self-basting. These self-basting turkeys are injected with lard and contain an incredible amount of fat. Compound the injected fat with the skin and the low fat turkey you thought you were baking actually turns out to be quite high in fat.

The best way to avoid the high fat that is injected into your turkey is to purchase a bird from a local butcher. You can request a fresh bird without any injected fat. If you bake a turkey with the skin on it, the fat content of the breast meat after you remove the skin will be about 30% fat. If you bake the turkey without the skin, the fat content of the breast will be 9% fat. Keep in mind that the fat content of turkey thigh meat is 45% fat. So if you are trying to cut back on your fat intake avoid the thigh meat and focus around the breast meat. The fat content of a turkey, which has been injected with fat and cooked with the skin on, could easily reach the 50% fat mark. The turkey recipe I am outlining is one without the injected fat with the skin left on.

## **The Turkey**

15-20 pound Turkey

Seasoning Option 1: Use La Madeleine's Rosemary Sage Seasoning

Seasoning Option 2: Make your own seasoning by mixing the following herbs.

2 tbsp. Fresh Rosemary

2 tbsp. Fresh Sage

2 tsp. Black Pepper

2 tsp. Paprika

2 tsp. Garlic Salt

Butter flavored cooking spray to coat the turkey before applying the seasoning.

Clean the turkey and remove the packaged giblets from the cavity. Spray the turkey with the cooking spray. Sprinkle the seasonings inside and out but rub extra herbs all over the outside of the turkey. Place the turkey in a shallow pan and cover with aluminum foil. Bake in a preheated oven (325 degrees) and follow the directions on the packaging to cook for the correct number of hours according to the weight of the turkey. Or cook until your meat thermometer registers 180 degrees. A good sign the turkey is done is when the leg of the turkey can be easily pierced with a fork and the juices don't run pink. Every 60 minutes as the turkey cooks remove the aluminum foil and mist the turkey with the cooking spray to keep it moist and once again coat the bird with more herb seasoning. This will create a great tasting herb crusted turkey that will literally look like a Norman Rockwell Painting but taste like a Martha Stewart delicacy.

Optional: Roast the turkey in a roasting bag and misting the turkey with cooking spray will be unnecessary. However, if you choose this route be sure to start off by applying more herb seasoning on the turkey since you won't be doing it once an hour.

Here's a low-fat option: Begin by removing skin from turkey. Repeat all of the above steps. Prepare an aluminum foil tent (cover turkey with aluminum foil loosely). During the last 10 minutes of cooking remove the aluminum foil so the turkey can brown.

Breast Meat Cooked without Skin (per 32oz.)

**Cal: 100/Fat: 1 gm/Chol: 45mg/% Fat: 9%**

Breast Meat Cooked with Skin but Removed (per 32 oz.)

**Cal: 195/Fat: 6.5gm/Chol: 76mg/% Fat: 30%**

## **Fat Free Turkey Gravy**

Fat free turkey gravy packets are sold in every grocery store. These powdered mixes work great but be sure to buy as many packets as you will need to make enough gravy to serve all of your guest. I usually mix 10 packets of powder with 10 cups of boiling chicken broth. Don't worry about making too much because any excess gravy can be frozen and reheated to go over leftovers or used for future recipes. Purchase as much low sodium chicken fat free chicken broth as you will need for the gravy.

Mix gravy packet(s) with fat free chicken broth instead of water and cook according to package directions. Bring the chicken to a boil and whisk in the powdered mix. While the gravy is simmering on the stove, toss in some minced garlic and a small amount of La Madaline's rosemary and sage seasoning.

## **Fat Free Herb Stuffing**

Stuffing that is made within the turkey is generally over 60% fat. The bread crumbs absorb virtually all the fat from the roasting skin. Trust me when I tell you that no-one will know the fat free stuffing recipe below was made without fat.

1 bag of fat free bagged stuffing mix. Try any brand of bagged herb stuffing mix. I personally like Pepperidge Farm or one from Whole Foods. But you might be surprised at how good Stove Top taste using the following recipe.

Instead of using boiling water, use the required amount of low sodium chicken broth. Bring the broth to a boil and stir in the stuffing mix. Use the following ingredients and follow the directions below.

1 cup chopped celery

½ cup chopped onion

1 cup sliced mushrooms

1 tsp chopped garlic

Fat free chicken broth

Sauté celery, onion, mushrooms and garlic in a non-stick pan that has been sprayed with Pam. In a pot, cook stuffing as directed on package but substituting chicken broth for the water. Toss the celery, onion, mushroom and garlic mixture into the prepared stuffing. Place the finished stuffing in a clay pot and place in the bottom of your oven to keep warm and serve.

I'm giving you a few different options to go along with the stuffing. I personally love the cranberry rice. It has great flavor and goes great with stuffing and gravy. But if your family loves yams or mashed potatoes I've added low fat alternatives too.

## **Cranberry Rice**

The amount of rice you will need depends on how many people you are serving. The recipe below makes about 4-5 servings.

1 cup Brown Rice

1 cup Wild Rice

4 cups Low sodium, Fat-Free Chicken Broth

2/3 cup Dried Cranberries or dried cherries

¼ cup chopped raw pecans or toasted slivered almonds

Boil the rice in the chicken broth on the stove or use a rice steamer. Cooker until rice is tender. Toss in the dried cranberries or cherries and raw pecans. Stir well. Let simmer a few minutes. This recipe is amazing as the color of the brown rice mixed with the black wild rice coupled with the burgundy color of the cranberries looks very festive. The combination of flavors of the rice with chicken broth along with the tart flavor and nuts come together to create a very unique but low fat and healthy rice dish.

## **Mashed Yams or Potatoes**

4 large Yams or Potatoes

¾ cup Skim Milk

1 tbs. Molly McButter

1tsp. Garlic Salt

½ cup Fat free sour cream

Either bake the yams in the oven at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until tender or place them in the microwave on high for 13-18 minutes or until soft. Remove the skins and place them in a large bowl. Mash the yams or potatoes together with the milk, Molly McButter, garlic salt, minced roasted garlic and fat free sour cream. Serve with the fat free gravy or Light Smart Balance Butter spread. (Serves 4)

## **Wild Rice**

2 cups Uncooked Wild Rice

4 cups water

2 cubes of Chicken Bouillon

1 cup Frozen Peas (thawed)

¼ cup Chopped Scallions

¾ cup Fresh Sliced Mushrooms

¼ cup Chopped Red Pepper

¼ tsp. Curry Powder (optional)

1/8 tsp. Garlic Powder

Wash rice until the water is clear. Place rice, water, bouillon cubes, curry and garlic powder in a sauce pan. Bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to low and let simmer for 20-25 minutes or until tender. Stir in peas and let simmer for five more minutes. Add peppers, mushrooms and scallions, stir & cover for five more minutes. (Makes 4 one cup servings)

## **Vegetable Medley**

2 cups Broccoli

2 cups Sliced Carrots

2 cups Cauliflower

¾ cup Red Onion

1 tsp. Molly McButter

¼ tsp. Garlic Salt

Place a steamer rack over a sauce pan with water. Place carrots on steamer & bring to boil for five minutes. Add cauliflower for five minutes. Then stir and add broccoli for five minutes. After five more minutes stir and add in red onions and seasonings for 3 minutes. (Serves 4)

## **Strawberry Passion**

1 pound Fresh Strawberries  
1 cup Red Raspberry Vinegar  
1 quart Blueberries, Mulberries or Raspberries  
Equal or Splenda as desired  
Fat Free Cool Whip

Cut off stems and slice strawberries in half. Place in a large bowl. Pour the Red Raspberry vinegar over the strawberries. Stir well coating all the strawberries with the vinegar and let the strawberries stand in refrigerator for 1 hour or more. Drain Strawberries and remove the vinegar by pouring the fruit into a strainer. Add 1 quart of fresh blueberries, raspberries or both into the bowl with the strawberries. Sprinkle the fruit mixture with plenty of Equal or Splenda. Place the mixed fruit into the bottom of a large wine glass and top with a layer of fat free cool whip. Once again add another layer of the fruit mixture and top with another layer of fat free cool whip. This should serve 4-6 people. The great thing about this desert is it's really a unique mixture of sweet and tart. It's also very festive looking because it's red, white and blue.

## **Fat Free Spinach Dip**

1 box Knorr's Vegetable Soup Mix (9 oz)  
1 cup Fat Free Sour Cream  
½ cup Kraft Fat Free Mayonnaise  
1- 10 oz. Package Frozen Chopped Spinach  
1 Small Can Sliced Water Chestnuts  
¼ cup Chopped Scallions  
1/8 tsp. Cayenne (Optional)  
1/2 tsp. Garlic Powder  
1 Block Fat Free Cream Cheese



Thaw the spinach in the microwave. Squeeze the fluid out of the spinach using paper towels. Place spinach in a large bowl and add the sour cream, cream cheese & mayonnaise and mix well. Stir in the soup mix, water chestnuts, scallions and cayenne pepper. Mix well. Chill for two hours. Serve with vegetables, fat free crackers or baked tortilla chips. No one will know this dip is fat free. So be sure to keep that to yourself until everyone has devoured the dip. It's usually the first thing gone from the snack table. Also, keep in mind this is a great snack item for you to bring to a party so that you have a snack to munch on alongside everyone else.

# Shopping List

## Meat:

15-20 pound Turkey (without injected fat)

## Seasonings:

Fresh Rosemary

Fresh Sage

Paprika

Garlic Salt

Garlic Powder

Cayenne

Curry Powder

Molly McButter

Chicken Broth

Knorr's Vegetable Soup Mix

Fat free turkey gravy packet(s)

Thyme

La Madeleine's Rosemary Sage Seasoning

## Fruit:

1 lb. Fresh strawberries or dried cherries

Dried Cranberries

1 quart Blueberries and/or Raspberries

## Vegetables:

1 small can of Sliced Water Chestnuts

Scallions

4 large Yams (Sweet Potatoes) or  
potatoes

Wild Rice

Fresh Mushrooms

Frozen peas

Red Pepper

Broccoli

Broccoli

Carrots

Cauliflower

Red Onion

Celery

Onion

**Miscellaneous:**

Cooking Spray

Equal or Splenda

Red Raspberry Vinegar

Fat Free Chicken Broth

Aluminum foil

Bagged Stuffing mix

Raw pecans or slivered almonds

**Dairy Products:**

Fat Free Land O'Lakes Sour Cream

Kraft Fat Free Mayonnaise

Skim Milk

8 oz. Carton of Dannon Plain Yogurt

Fat Free Cool Whip

Fat free cream cheese