



FIVE STEPS TO SURVIVING THE FESTIVE SEASON

Ashleigh Feltham shares her top tips to keeping your health in tact during the upcoming indulgent season.



It's that time of year when you receive multiple invitations to Christmas parties. It's called 'the silly season' for many reasons, and one includes the choices that are made by many of us, to enjoy foods and drinks that are a sometimes considered a treat throughout the year, but which all of a sudden become a food group! This may sound (and feel) like a fun idea at the time, but once the silly season is over, well your waistline may suggest otherwise.

So, here are a few tips to help you get through the festive season, without coming out of it looking like Santa!

1. Eat before you go

This may sound anti-intuitive, since you're probably going to be provided with an abundance of delicious food and drinks at your celebrations. However, these offerings are likely to be energy-dense, not very filling, and liable to trick your brain into feeling like it wants more. Alcohol, although considered a macronutrient, is calorie-dense and wreaks havoc on your metabolism because it your body automatically prioritises the processing of alcohol over its ability to digest food. The result is that your body stores most of the food you eat, as fat. Alcohol also compromises the part of your brain that usually lets you know when you are full (and should stop eating and drinking). On top of this, typical party foods tend to be sweets and savoury treats, which are usually high in fat, salt and added sugars that keep you going back for more!

So, no prizes now for guessing why eating before you go is a good idea (for your health). Some good pre-party meal or snack options include:

- A tin of tuna in spring water with half a cup of brown rice and a cup of your favourite frozen vegetables. Microwave and add some chilli and herbs and spices for taste.
- A whole grain sandwich with ½ an avocado and a handful of sliced mushrooms. Add some chilli and pepper for extra flavour.
- A 200g tub of low fat yogurt with 2 tablespoons of oats and a cup of frozen vegetables.
- Two to three whole grain crackers with hummus to dip and some carrot and celery sticks to munch on the side.
- Two Weetabix with some low or no fat milk and a banana.

2. Take every second drink

There can be pressure at a party to always have a glass in your hand. But remember, this glass does not need to contain alcohol. Instead, try swapping every second glass of alcohol for something like mineral water or a diet soft drink.

3. Be someone's hero and be the designated driver

Being the designated driver can seem like a drag, but look at it this way: you're potentially saving lives and your waistline too!

4. Offer to bring a plate

If appropriate, offer to bring a plate along. Some of my favourite healthy party plates are:

- Freshly cut fruit, served with low fat Greek yogurt as a dipping sauce.
- Place cut vegetables like carrots, celery, capsicum and roasted vegetables on skewers, and serve with hummus.

5. Pick two to three treats you really want

Most likely there'll be many food options to enjoy at your Christmas parties. So take your time to select two to three items that you really want to enjoy, and take the time to mindfully consume them. Being mindful can help you enjoy the food in front of you, will prevent any feelings of regret or guilt, you'll avoid over-indulging, and you'll also avoid feeling deprived.

It's a wonderful time to enjoy life and food, and with these five tips it's easier than you think to enjoy the silly season without starting the new year with regret or excess kilos! Just remember to keep moving your body, since exercise (especially weight training) will help keep your metabolism firing. **OH!**

YOU CAN CONTACT ASHLEIGH VIA:

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Facebook: [FeedYourFutureDietetics](https://www.facebook.com/FeedYourFutureDietetics)

Instagram: [@feedyourfuturedietetics](https://www.instagram.com/feedyourfuturedietetics)