

The FSA's Top Tips on Healthy Eating Over Christmas

There are many ways that you can enjoy a healthy and nutritious Christmas so here's how to merrily munch your way through the festive season.

- Try to eat breakfast on Christmas day as this will fill you up and you will be less likely to snack on Christmas choccies!
- Serve Christmas dinner with heaps of veg for a balanced meal which helps towards the target of at least five fruit and vegetables a day. Fruit and veggies are a good source of nutrients and they contain hardly any fat!
- Microwave, steam or roast veg to preserve more vitamins. Cook and serve without salt. Try other flavourings like pepper or fresh herbs instead
- Cut potatoes for roasting into larger chunks – they'll absorb less fat. Roast in a small amount of unsaturated (e.g. sunflower) oil for a healthier choice
- Turkey meat is a lower fat choice for Christmas dinner; traditionally goose was eaten but is much higher in fat
- Try making your own gravy instead of using cubes or granules which tend to be high in salt
- At tea time go for turkey sandwiches, made with thickly cut bread and filled with spinach and watercress
- When it comes to the traditional Christmas pudding, for a healthy change, instead of serving it with brandy butter, try some natural yoghurt or even some fresh fruit
- If you're having sweet treats like sweets, cake and crisps, try having them in smaller amounts instead
- During the party season, it's easy to drink lots of sugary fizzy drinks but opt for water or fruit juice when you can or add a slice of lemon or lime to water
- For healthy snacks, go for unsalted nuts, dried fruit or satsumas
- Avoid feeling uncomfortably full by eating more slowly
- Get active rather than slump on the sofa - take a brisk walk, play an indoor game or maybe just crank up the music and dance away those calories!

For more healthy eating tips go to www.eatwell.gov.uk

THE FSA'S TOP CHRISTMAS TURKEY TIPS AND ADVICE

So what is the best way to defrost a turkey?

The best and safest method to defrost your turkey is in the fridge, allowing 10–12 hours per Kilo. If you can't fit your turkey in the fridge, defrost it at room temperature (allowing 2 hours per Kilo) taking care to make sure it is covered and does not touch any other foods.

Always make sure that the turkey is thoroughly defrosted before putting it in the oven. So now you've got the turkey sorted, follow the Agency's guide to basic timings for cooking and advice on handling your turkey and ensure the rest of the cooking process doesn't leave you in a flap!

Handling and storing

- Plan a realistic amount of food that you can cope with. If you have so much perishable food that it won't fit in the fridge, you might compromise its safety by storing it somewhere that isn't cold enough
- Buy a turkey that's realistic for your needs - the bigger the turkey the more difficult it is to prepare and cook safely
- Make sure the turkey is properly defrosted before you cook it. When it's completely thawed there won't be any ice crystals inside the cavity. You can also test it with a fork where the thickest part of the meat is, to tell whether the meat feels frozen
- Store raw meat at the bottom of the fridge in a covered container where it can't drip onto other foods. Always keep raw poultry away from ready-to-eat foods
- Wash hands, chopping boards, utensils and work surfaces with warm water and soap after they have been in contact with raw meat. Use a separate chopping board for raw meat
- Never wash your turkey (or other poultry) - washing can splash harmful bacteria onto worktops, dishes and other foods. Proper cooking will kill any bacteria so you have no need to wash poultry
- Always check that the meat is properly cooked through before you serve it. Make sure that the meat is piping hot all the way through. Cut into the thickest part and check that none of the meat is pink and if juices run out when you pierce the turkey they should be clear
- Don't leave food out all day. Better to put out small amounts at a time, so that what has been on the table has just been cooked or just come out of the fridge. Try to use any leftovers ideally within 48 hours or freeze them

Cooking

- It's very important to plan your cooking time in advance to make sure you get the turkey in the oven early enough to cook it thoroughly. A large turkey can take several hours to cook properly
- Often cooking advice is included on the turkey's packaging, or you can look in your oven handbook, or in a cookery book
- As a general guide, for a turkey under 4.5kg allow 45 minutes per kg plus 20 minutes; for one weighing between 4.5kg and 6.5kg 40 minutes per kg; and for those over 6.5kg 35 minutes per kg at 180°C, 350°F, Gas Mark 4 (after the oven has preheated). These times are for an un-stuffed bird
- It is safer to cook stuffing separately in a roasting tin, but if you decide to cook your turkey with the stuffing inside, allow extra time for the amount of stuffing and for the fact that the bird cooks more slowly. Remember, some ovens, such as fan-assisted ovens, might cook the turkey more quickly so always check the manufacturer's handbook for your oven

CRACKING FESTIVE FOOD FACTS

- ❖ Sales of Christmas foods amounted to a massive £2.5 billion in 2005, up by 14% on 2003
- ❖ On average, each household will spend approximately £163 on food and drink over Christmas
- ❖ In 2005, the UK spent around £42 million on Christmas puddings
- ❖ Around 10 million turkeys are eaten every Christmas and the traditional festive feast will cost the nation £305 million on turkeys alone
- ❖ Christmas dinner provides the perfect opportunity to indulge your body with a feast of healthy goodies and hit those 5-a-day veggie targets. Pile your plate full of colourful veggies as they're packed full of important vitamins and nutrients
- ❖ At Christmas the UK will indulge in around:
 - 19,000 tons of turkey
 - 120,000 tons of potatoes
 - 1,200 tons of parsnips
 - 1,600 tons of chestnuts
 - 7.5 million carrots
 - 16 million packets of stuffing
 - 11 million Christmas cakes
 - 40,000 tons of clementines, mandarins and satsumas
- ❖ On average over Christmas, the UK will indulge in approximately 5.5 million jars of mincemeat, 12 million jars of pickles and 6.5 million jars of cranberry sauce
- ❖ 15,000 tonnes of sprouts will be bought in the UK during the Christmas period and during the festive season, each person will eat an average of 15 sprouts
- ❖ 175 million mince pies will be bought from Britain's supermarkets this Christmas. If these were stacked on top of each other, they would stretch 3,262 miles high – that's nearly 600 times the height of Mount Everest!
- ❖ Mince pies get their name from their original filling which contained minced meats as well as fruits and spices The pastry around the pie was said to represent the manger in which Jesus lay
- ❖ Nearly 3,000 tonnes of aluminium foil will be used to wrap Christmas turkeys this year
- ❖ The average person eats a gut busting average of 7000 calories on Christmas Day and it would take roughly 780 minutes of running to burn off those calories!

Notes to editors:

Information sources include:

- *Food reference.com*
- *Mintel Report into Christmas Foods, February 2006*
- *DEFRA*
- *Independent.co.uk*
- *Daily Mail, 2005*
- *nfuonline.com*
- *British Retail Consortium*
- *Hungrymonster.com*
- *Foodreference.com*
- *Files.recycleworks.co.uk*