

# Focus on the 'Stars'

## Cooking Healthy for the Holidays

Barbara Ames, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent,  
K-State Research and Extension - Wildcat District,

### Introduction Ideas

**What do you look forward to most about holiday celebrations?** Are holiday foods on your list? The holiday season brings many special celebrations with fun, family, and food galore. Many families have traditions centered on fabulous foods and drinks that they get to enjoy only a few times per year. While celebrations are to be encouraged, it is wise to think carefully and make a plan of action before heading into a season traditionally filled with fat-laden and sugar-filled foods.

**Americans typically gain 1 to 3 pounds (or even more) between Thanksgiving and the New Year.** On face value, this is no big deal. The problem is that most people don't lose that excess weight and it adds up over several years, creating the possibility of chronic health problems. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates chronic disease is responsible for more than 70 percent of health-care expenditures in the state of Kansas. Furthermore, many chronic conditions can be prevented and controlled by healthy lifestyle behaviors, including maintaining a healthy weight.

Holiday celebrations and traditions are an important part of life to be enjoyed. And it is possible to reduce the large amounts of fats and sugar usually found in holiday recipes and focus more on the "star" ingredients — fruits and vegetables. With a little planning and a few simple changes, you can enjoy great-tasting holiday foods and still maintain a healthy lifestyle.



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Research and Extension

## Educational Goals

As a result of this lesson participants will:

- have a new understanding of the effect of adding additional fat and sugar to recipes using fruits and vegetables,
- gain ideas for more healthful ways to prepare favorite holiday foods, and
- be motivated to think of ways to make simple modifications to other favorite recipes.

## Intended Audience

Anyone involved in choosing recipes or preparing meals for holidays or other special occasions.

## Suggested Program Preparation

- Review this leader's guide and the related fact sheet. If desired, review the website resources listed in these materials.
- Secure a copy of the Powerpoint presentation that accompanies this lesson, if desired.
- Gather copies (or make photocopies) of the fact sheet and participant survey for each audience member.
- Make photocopies of the recipe section from this leader's guide for each participant.
- Have pens or pencils available.

## Suggestions for Presenting the Lesson

- **If using a Powerpoint presentation, set up necessary equipment and load Powerpoint presentation for use in sharing the lesson.**
- **Begin by posing a question** to your audience to capture their attention and get them thinking about the topic at hand. Possible questions could be: "What do you look forward to most about holiday celebrations?" or "What is a favorite holiday food tradition for your family?"
- **Discuss the concept of "star" ingredients** and how it relates to holiday foods. Discuss the chart outlining the amount of added sugar in sweetened applesauce. If desired, have samples of sweetened and unsweetened applesauce for each person to taste and compare to determine if the extra sweetness is worth the additional calories which must be burned.
- **Review the five "star" foods** in the fact sheet and discuss tips for more healthful preparation and the information in the comparison charts.

- **If possible, choose one or more of the suggested teaching activities** to reinforce the lesson.
- **Call participants' attention to the "Tasty, Healthier Foods Possible" section of the fact sheet and share** that some of the modified recipes may still contribute more calories per serving than the average person should regularly consume. However, let them know that the recipes are more healthful, calorie-saving alternatives compared to traditional recipes.
- **Encourage participants to complete and return the Participant Survey** on page 7 of this leader's guide.

## Suggested Teaching Activities

- **A Powerpoint presentation of this lesson is available upon request from Barbara Ames**, Wildcat District Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, at [bames@ksu.edu](mailto:bames@ksu.edu) or 620-331-2690.
- **Choose one of the recipes included in the Leader's Guide to prepare for the group to taste.** Or, if possible, have several people who will be attending prepare a different recipe in advance for the group to taste. If desired, enlarge and print the related comparison chart to display next to each food during the tasting. Participants may be surprised at how good the lighter version recipes taste and may like to see the amount of calories they can save by making a few easy changes.
- **Encourage attendees to bring a favorite holiday recipe not included in the lesson.** In response to recipe modification ideas mentioned in the lesson, lead some group discussions regarding healthful changes attendees could make to their own favorite recipe while maintaining great taste.
- **Lead a group discussion about favorite herbs, spices, and seasoning blends** that can be used to enhance flavor in place of some fat and sugar.
- **Challenge participants** to choose and write down one or more recipes to share with family members at the holidays.

## Suggested Community Awareness Activities

- Present this program to already-established community groups such as social clubs, service organizations, or church groups.

- Share a display and distribute fact sheets from this lesson at community health fairs or county health clinics. The display could include some enlarged copies of the Dare to Compare Recipe Charts to pique interest in the amount of calories which can be saved.
- Before the holidays, share the basics of this lesson in a news column sent to your local newspaper.

## Author

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## Resources

*Choose MyPlate*, United States Department of  
Agriculture, [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)

*Epicurious* website, [www.epicurious.com/recipesmenus](http://www.epicurious.com/recipesmenus)

*Fix It Fresh! Fruits and Vegetables Recipes Series*, Mary  
Meck Higgins, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., CDE, Assistant  
Professor, Department of Human Nutrition, Kansas  
State University Agricultural Experiment Station  
and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan,  
Kan.  
[www.ksre.ksu.edu/HumanNutrition/doc10559.aspx](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/HumanNutrition/doc10559.aspx)

*Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina*, Holiday  
Challenge website,  
[myeatssmartmovemore.com/WordPress/recipes-2/  
holiday-challenge/](http://myeatssmartmovemore.com/WordPress/recipes-2/holiday-challenge/)

*The Good Housekeeping Cookbook*, edited by Zoe  
Coulson, The Hearst Corporation, Copyright  
MCMLXXIII

*Healthy Holiday Cooking*, University of Nebraska  
Lincoln Extension,  
[www.extension.org/pages/24761/healthy-  
holidaycooking](http://www.extension.org/pages/24761/healthy-holidaycooking)

*Healthy Season Side Dishes and Salads and Snacks*,  
Healthy, Thrifty Holiday Cooking: Resource  
Library: SNAP-Ed Connection, USDA, National  
Agricultural Library, Food and Nutrition  
Information Center. [snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-  
library/winters-abundance/healthy-thrifty-holiday-  
cooking](http://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/winters-abundance/healthy-thrifty-holiday-cooking)

*New Revised Edition Taste of Home Cookbook*, 2008,  
Reiman Media Group, Inc., ISBN 978-089821-  
666-0

*VeryBestBaking: Bake the Very Best* website,  
[www.verybestbaking.com/Recipes.aspx](http://www.verybestbaking.com/Recipes.aspx)

*Walking Calories Calculator*,  
[walking.about.com/library/cal/uccalc1.htm](http://walking.about.com/library/cal/uccalc1.htm)



## My Holiday Plate Recipes

### Pineapple Sweet Potatoes

Makes 4 servings.

- 4 small fresh sweet potatoes or yams
  - 1 cup (about 12 ounces) pineapple tidbits or crushed pineapple, in juice, drained
  - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 2 teaspoons margarine
  - 3 tablespoons chopped pecans, optional
1. Scrub sweet potatoes and cut each into 4 pieces. In a covered saucepan, boil sweet potatoes in just enough water to cover. When they are fork-tender (about 15 to 20 minutes), drain. Remove skin and any bad spots.
  2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray an oven-proof dish with non-stick cooking spray.
  3. Mix pineapple and cinnamon. Put half of the pineapple mixture in a dish and then half the sweet potato pieces over the pineapple. Repeat. Place margarine on top of potatoes, sprinkle with nuts, and bake for 45 minutes.

*Source: K-State "Fix It Fresh!"*

#### **Nutrition per 3/4-cup serving (without pecans):**

160 calories, 2 g fat, 0 cholesterol, 90 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 12 g sugar, 2 g protein.

### Citrus Sweet Potatoes

Makes 6 servings.

- 3 medium sweet potatoes, peeled
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1½ teaspoons cornstarch

- ½ cup orange juice concentrate
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- ¼ cup chopped pecans, optional

1. Scrub sweet potatoes and cut each into 4 to 6 pieces. In a covered saucepan, boil sweet potatoes in just enough water to cover. When they are fork-tender (about 15 to 20 minutes), drain. Remove skin and any bad spots.
2. Cut potatoes into ½-inch slices. Place in a square 8-inch by 2-inch baking dish sprayed with non-stick cooking spray.
3. In a small saucepan, combine brown sugar and cornstarch. Whisk in orange juice concentrate and lemon peel. Bring to a boil, cook, and stir for 1 to 2 minutes or until thickened. Pour over sweet potatoes. Sprinkle with pecans if desired.
4. Bake uncovered at 325°F for 25 to 30 minutes or until sweet potatoes are heated through and sauce is bubbly.

*Source: Recipe provided courtesy of Taste of Home magazine. Find more great recipes at [www.tasteofhome.com](http://www.tasteofhome.com).*

#### **Nutrition per ¾-cup serving (without pecans):**

120 calories, 0 fat, 0 cholesterol, 20 mg sodium, 30 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 20 g sugars, 1 g protein.

### Healthier Green Bean Casserole

Makes 9 servings.

- 1 can (10¾ ounces) reduced-fat cream of mushroom soup
  - ½ cup fat-free sour cream
  - ¼ cup fat-free milk
  - 2 cans (15 ounces each) drained green beans or two 9-ounce bags frozen green beans
  - ½ cup canned French-fried onions (See note below.)
1. Mix soup, sour cream, and milk in 2-quart casserole.
  2. Stir in beans and bake uncovered at 350°F until mixture is bubbly — about 40 minutes.
  3. Sprinkle onions on top and cook for 5 more minutes.

*Source: North Carolina Eat Smart, Move More.*

**Nutrition per ½-cup serving:** 100 calories, 4 g fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 230 mg sodium, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 3 g sugars, 3 g protein.

**Note:** For extra calorie and fat savings, consider gently cooking fresh onions in a non-stick skillet to use as topping instead of purchased French-fried onions.

## Green Bean Sauté

Makes 6 servings.

- 1 cup sliced onion
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 can (16 ounces) cut green beans

1. Spray a skillet with non-stick cooking spray. Over medium heat, cook onions, mushrooms, and garlic until onions are soft.

2. Add drained green beans and heat thoroughly.

*Source: USDA Snap-Ed Connection.*

**Nutrition per ½-cup serving:** 35 calories, 0 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 200 mg sodium, 6 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 2 g sugars, 2 g protein.



## Light 'n' Creamy Mashed Potatoes

Makes 14 servings.

- 6 cups quartered, peeled potatoes (about 3 pounds as purchased)
- 4 ounces fat-free cream cheese
- ½ cup reduced-fat sour cream
- ½ cup fat-free milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
- Dash of paprika

1. Place potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and boil gently for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender. Drain.
2. In a large mixing bowl, mash the potatoes with electric mixer.

3. Add cream cheese, sour cream, milk, salt, garlic powder, and pepper. Beat until smooth, stir in chives, and sprinkle with paprika.

*Source: Recipe provided courtesy of Taste of Home magazine. Find more great recipes at [www.tasteofhome.com](http://www.tasteofhome.com).*

**Nutrition per ½ cup serving:** 80 calories, 1g fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 150 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 2 g sugars, 3 g protein.

## Yogurt Mashed Potatoes

Makes 10 servings.

- 4 cups potatoes, peeled, cut into eighths (about 2 pounds as purchased)
- ¼ cup fat-free milk
- 1¼ cups plain fat-free yogurt
- 4 green onions, sliced
- ½ to 1 teaspoon garlic powder, or desired seasoning
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Chopped fresh parsley

1. Place potatoes in microwave-safe dish. Add milk. Cover tightly and cook on high until potatoes are tender but not mushy, about 12 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, combine yogurt, green onions, and garlic powder in a bowl.
3. Remove potatoes from microwave, add yogurt mixture, and mash roughly.
4. Season with salt and pepper and garnish with parsley.

*Source: Adapted from Epicurious.com.*

**Nutrition per ½ cup serving (without added salt):** 70 calories, 0 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 25 mg sodium, 16 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 3 g sugars, 3 g protein.

## Light Pumpkin Pie

Makes 8 servings.

- 1 cup ginger snap cookies
- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
- ½ cup egg whites (about 4)
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated fat-free milk

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray 9-inch round glass pie dish with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Grind the ginger snap cookies in a food processor. Pat the cookie crumbs into the pan evenly.
3. Mix the rest of the ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Pour into the crust and bake until knife inserted in center comes out clean, about 45

minutes. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate.

*Source: North Carolina Eat Smart, Move More.*

**Nutrition per 1/8 of recipe:** 220 calories, 4.5 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 160 mg sodium, 39 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 28 g sugars, 7 g protein.

## Crustless Pumpkin Pie

Makes 8 servings.

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
  - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
  - 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
  - 2 large eggs
  - 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
  - 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated fat-free milk
  - Reduced-fat whipped topping, optional
1. Spray 9-inch round glass pie dish with nonstick cooking spray. Preheat oven to 325°F.
  2. Mix sugar, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and cloves in small bowl.
  3. Beat eggs in large mixing bowl. Stir in pumpkin and sugar-spice mixture. Gradually stir in evaporated milk. Pour into pie dish.
  4. Bake for 55 to 60 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate. Top with whipped topping if desired.

*Source: www.verybestbaking.com.*

**Nutrition for 1/8 of recipe (without topping):** 140 calories, 1.5 g fat, 55 cholesterol, 210 mg sodium, 28 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 26 g sugar, 6 g protein.

## Fall Apple Crisp

Makes 9 servings.

- 7 cups cored, sliced apples, about 2 pounds or about 5 large apples (Granny Smith, Jonathan, or Jonagold work well)
- 1/3 cup apple juice
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 5 tablespoons soft tub margarine, cut into small pieces
- 3 tablespoons slivered almonds



1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Peel apples, if desired, slice, and toss in a mixing bowl with apple juice to coat.
3. Combine flour, both kinds of sugar, and oats in another mixing bowl. Cut in margarine using two knives until mixture is crumbly. Stir in almonds.
4. Spray a square 8-inch by 2-inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Pour apples into baking dish and sprinkle with crumb mixture. Bake 45 minutes or until topping turns golden brown.

*Source: North Carolina Eat Smart, Move More.*

**Nutrition per 1/8 of recipe:** 200 calories, 8 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 60 mg sodium, 33 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 22 g sugars, 2 g protein.

## Slow Cooker Baked Apples

Makes 9 servings.

- 6 large baking apples (Granny Smith, Jonathan, or Jonagold work well)
  - 3 tablespoons brown sugar
  - 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
  - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
1. Quarter apples and remove core. Place in slow cooker.
  2. Mix sugar and spices and sprinkle over apples. Cover and cook 4 hours on low or 2 hours on high, stirring once after juice begins to form to more evenly distribute seasonings.

**Nutrition per 1/8 of recipe:** 110 calories, 0 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 0 mg sodium, 27 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 21 g sugar, 1 g protein.

## Focus on the 'Stars': Cooking Healthy for the Holidays Participant Survey

We appreciate your opinions! Please help us make our programs better by taking about 5 minutes to answer the following questions. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may skip answering one or more questions if you wish. The information that you share will be held in the strictest confidence. We will summarize it in reports, in order to evaluate our program. We greatly value your participation. Thank you!

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. As a result of this program, I improved my knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. As a result of this program, I plan to practice new skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. As a result of this program, I intend to make at least one healthy change in my eating habits.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. As a result of this program, I have also learned:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. I plan to take action and/or change something in my life (at home, at play, or at work).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. If agree, please describe the actions or changes planned:

7. Additional Comments:

8. A K-State representative may contact me later to talk about this program (We are asking for your contact information so that we may follow-up with you about what you learned from this program):

Yes:  No:

9. If yes, my contact information is below (e.g., name, address, city, state, zip code, phone, and email):

### Demographics

10. I am an adult:

18 to 29 Years

30 to 39 Years

40 to 49 Years

50 to 59 Years

60 to 69 Years

70+ Years

11. I am a youth:

0 to 4 Years

5 to 11 Years

12 to 17 Years

12. My gender:

Male

Female

Prefer not to respond

13. My race:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

White

Prefer not to respond

14. My ethnicity:

Hispanic / Latino

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino

Prefer not to respond

15. For office use only: Coded identification number-

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