



The Be Fit Minute

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HAPPY HOLIDAY COOKING SWAPS

No need to forgo health this season. Look to these foods to make your holiday meals balanced, merry, and bright.

Butternut Squash:

This vegetable can work in creamy holiday dishes—like macaroni and cheese or vegetable lasagna—that call for a béchamel sauce (a sauce made with butter, milk, and flour). Pureed butternut squash works well as a thickener and can be blended with the cheese sauce. Cubed cooked butternut squash can also be added to cheesy casseroles as a replacement for some of the other starches that appear in the dishes.

Holiday Health: While pasta or rice has about 200 calories per cup, butternut squash only has 80; in addition, squash has more fiber to help you feel fuller for longer. It is also a way to fight the flu, as it's a great source of both vitamin C and vitamin A: two nutrients necessary for a healthy immune system.

Unsweetened Applesauce or Prune Puree:

Substitute an equal amount of apple sauce or prune puree (sometimes called plum puree) for ½ the fat in recipes when baking. (This works particularly well in recipes that use oil as their fat source.) Try this with muffins, cakes, and sweet breads, like cranberry nut bread. Add the applesauce or prune puree with your liquid ingredients. Substituting some of the fat may result in a slightly denser final product; if the recipe calls for eggs, you may want to beat the egg whites separately until soft peaks form and then fold them in with the other ingredients for a lighter end result.

Wine:

In dishes or sides that call for savory butter-based sauces, 'tis the season to look to your wine rack. You can replace 1 tablespoon of butter with a few tablespoons of wine. While you won't want to replace all the butter in recipes, this is a way to add depth to your sauces with fewer calories and less fat.

Cauliflower or Turnips:

While mashed potatoes certainly have their place, if you are looking to slim down your holiday table this year try these lower calorie vegetables. Both cauliflower and turnips can be boiled, mashed, and prepared in a manner similar to mashed potatoes. You could also try cutting the amount of potatoes you would normally use in half, replacing some potatoes with turnips.

Holiday Health: Both cauliflower and turnips are cruciferous vegetables with cancer-fighting properties.

Plain Greek Yogurt:

Greek yogurt is a great substitute for sour cream in holiday recipes: it has the same texture and consistency with fewer calories and much less fat.

Holiday Health: 1 cup of 2% Greek yogurt has about 150 calories and 3 grams saturated fat versus 500 calories and 30 grams saturated fat with sour cream. (Saturated fat has been linked to raising bad cholesterol.) It can be used as a substitute for sour cream-based dips that appear around the holidays, as well as in baking. Greek yogurt is also a good source of calcium and protein.

White Whole Wheat Flour:

Despite the mention of "white," this flour is actually a whole grain. White whole wheat flour is a different type of wheat variety and is processed to contain the entire grain—including the bran and germ—so it is nutrient-packed.

Holiday Health: It typically has 3-5 grams of fiber per 1/3 cup serving (compared to 1 gram for all purpose flour), yet is lighter in color and milder than regular whole wheat flour so picky eaters will be less likely to detect a difference. Try substituting half of the all purpose flour with white whole wheat flour in holiday cookie and bread recipes.