

A Dietitian's Top Three Tips

TO LESS STRESSFUL AND MORE SATISFYING HOLIDAY MEALS

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One of my favorite things about the holiday season is the food. Food has such a wonderful way to transform a room and evoke emotions and memories, but for some this can be a challenging experience.

Do you experience stress around holiday meals? Ever felt like the food wasn't satisfying? Have you ever felt pressure to be "good" and not eat too much? Or what about the feeling of emptiness all day because you didn't eat so you wouldn't feel guilty when it came time for the big dinner or shame after you overindulged and ate more than you "should" have—what about those?

If you've ever had experiences like these, keep reading 'cause I'm sharing my top three tips for less stress and more satisfaction at holiday meals!

Tip #1: Eat the Foods You Actually Enjoy

Don't punish yourself with eating foods you don't even like—go ahead and eat foods you actually enjoy. It can be difficult to do this, though, if you're wrapped up in

food rules and regulations. You don't have to eat "good" foods to make up for the "bad" foods you're going to eat later. When you do this, it's likely you're going to be dissatisfied with the meal and end up eating past comfortable fullness. This overly-full sensation can leave you uncomfortable and empty-feeling at the same time. And besides, foods are foods—no good, no bad—just foods.

Tip #2: Your Plate is Your Business

I cannot stress this enough. You are in charge of your body, and that includes the food you put in it. If Uncle Freddy makes an off-hand remark about that second slice of pecan pie you went back for, tell him "Well Uncle Freddy, my plate is my business. I'm going to call the shots for my plate, and I'll let you call the shots for yours." You don't have to be mean, but you are responsible for defining your boundaries—Uncle Freddy should get the idea. And, if he doesn't, reiterate the sentiment and move on with life. Don't give him the power to ruin your meal!

Tip #3: Make Peace with Your Meal

Do this by giving yourself as much time as you need with your holiday meal and savor each of the unique foods on your plate: their appearance, fragrance, flavor, texture—the whole package. You deserve to eat your meal without obnoxious and intrusive thoughts, and when you're at peace with the meal you'll find that the peace doesn't leave much room for judgment. When you take a moment in peace to slow down and appreciate the different aspects of the meal, you'll find greater satisfaction in the overall experience.

Well there you have it! Pretty straightforward, right? Just remember that these tips might take some practice and getting used to—putting them into action is a process but so worth the effort! I hope you have a truly enjoyable holiday season—meals and all!



Sydney Caveró-Egúsqúiza, MS, RD/LD is manager, registered dietitian, and certified intuitive eating counselor at Simply You Nutrition in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She lives with her husband and two kitties, and her favorite holiday foods are green bean casserole, her momma's pumpkin pie, and her own special version of her grandmother's cranberry relish. Oh, and don't forget the homemade Chex mix and puppy chow!