HOW TO STAY Healthy DURING THE Winter Season

by Anna Tran, RDN, LD

With the transition from hot summer days to cooler nights, ice-cold sweet tea to pumpkin-spiced hot drinks, and spring mixed fruit salads to hearty stews, this winter season, we are ecstatic to share healthier alternatives for recipes that feed not only the body but also the soul.

During the winter, when the holidays are in full swing, it can be challenging to stay healthy. Rather than focusing on cutting back, let's focus on what we can add in. Any comforting dish can be made healthy with the addition of good carbohydrates, protein, fruits and veggies. Here are some tips on how you can stay healthy during this winter season.

THINK COLOR AND DIVERSITY

When considering how you'll be adding color and flair to your holiday dishes, think seasonal fruits and vegetables. Each colorful fruit and vegetable can provide a variety of health benefits such as:

- Fiber
- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Antioxidants

With the addition of fiber and other nutrients, you can stay full for longer. Pile your plate first with delicious fruits and vegetables.

SLOW DOWN AND SOCIALIZE

Whether you're celebrating on your own or with your family and friends, make memories by including your favorite activities in between. Some ideas can include decorating your home, dancing to music, walking outside or playing interactive board games with your loved ones. By slowing down, we can incorporate physical activity into the day without having to find time in our hectic schedule to go to the gym. It's a win-win situation!

LEMON THYME GREEN TEA

Recipe from ***TasteofHome.com***

Ingredients:

- 2 quarts of water
- 8 individual green tea bags
- 12 fresh lemon thyme sprigs or 8 fresh thyme sprigs plus ½ tsp. grated lemon peel
- ¼ cup honey
- 3 tbsp. lemon juice

Directions:

1. Boil water and remove from heat.
2. Add tea bags and lemon thyme sprigs. Cover and steep for 3 minutes.
3. Discard tea bags. Cover and steep for another 3 minutes.
4. Strain the tea and add honey and lemon juice. Stir until honey is dissolved.
5. Serve and enjoy immediately.

FLUFFY MASHED SWEET POTATOES AND CARROTS

*Recipe from **MinimalistBaker.com***

Ingredients:

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped into large bite-sized pieces
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and chopped into large bite-sized pieces
- Water
- 2-3 tbsp. butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp. ground ginger
- ½ tsp. group turmeric
- Sea salt to taste

Directions:

1. Rinse, peel and chop potatoes and carrots into large bite-sized pieces and add to a large pot. Cover with water by about 1 inch to ensure they are submerged.
2. Bring water to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, slightly reduce heat to medium-high and continue cooking at a slightly less rapid boil for 10-15 minutes or until the potatoes and carrots are very tender (*they should easily fall off a knife when pierced*).
3. Drain carrots and potatoes and add back to the pot. Add butter of choice, minced garlic, ginger, turmeric, and sea salt to taste. Mash (*or puree*) until smooth.
4. Add more butter (*or a bit of water)* as needed to get creamy and smooth. Taste and adjust flavor as needed, adding more butter for creaminess, spices to taste, or sea salt to taste.
5. Serve hot. Garnish with additional butter of choice, fresh parsley and salt and pepper to taste.

VEGETABLE POT PIE

*Recipe from **ForksOverKnives.com***

Ingredients:

- 3 cups sliced fresh cremini mushrooms
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- ½ cup sliced celery
- 3 ¼ cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cups of ½ inch pieces peeled butternut squash
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 15 oz. can of no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 3 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 lb. refrigerated whole wheat pizza dough
- 1 tbsp. unsweetened plant milk (*i.e. almond, soy, cashew or rice*)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. For filling, in a 4-quart saucepan, cook mushrooms, carrots, and celery over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally and adding water (*1-2 tablespoons at a time*) as needed to prevent sticking. Add 3 cups of the broth, the squash, onions, thyme and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat. Simmer while covered for 5 minutes or until the vegetables are nearly tender. Stir in chickpeas, peas and corn.
2. Whisk together flour and the remaining ¼ cup broth, then stir into vegetables. Cook until thick and bubbly, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Remove and discard bay leaf. Season filling with salt and pepper. Spread into a 2 ½ to 3–quart round or oval baking dish.
3. On a lightly floured surface, roll homemade oil-free pizza dough into a circle or oval slightly larger than the dish. Cut several slits in dough, then place on filling and seal. Brush with milk. Bake 15 minutes or until crust is browned and filling is bubbly.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

There's no reason to pass up on all of your favorite nostalgic holiday meals. Rather than saying no to all of your favorite foods, practice moderation and mindfulness. When we are too restrictive with foods, we tend to eat larger amounts of less healthy options. If you love pumpkin pie, let yourself have a slice. Make it a conscious decision and don't feel guilty about enjoying your favorite meals.

REST AND RESET

This is an easy one to understand, but a difficult one to practice in reality. During your holiday schedule, things can get hectic, but prioritizing sleep will help your body function at its best. Sleep keeps us healthy both physically and mentally. When we are sleep-deprived, we tend to crave higher-calorie foods to compensate for the lack of energy that we have. Getting a good night's sleep can help you have a healthier, happier, and more productive day.

TRY HEALTHIER DRINK OPTIONS

Winter can leave us craving hot chocolate or pumpkin spiced coffee with a lot of whipped cream. Comforting drinks that keep you warm tend to be high in calories. Enjoying the occasional higher-calorie drink is great, but making it an everyday occurrence can lead to weight gain. Instead, try a variety of hot teas or low-calorie coffee drinks to promote comfort and good health. If you want a sweeter taste, try adding honey, agave nectar or other sugar substitutes.

CONCLUSION:

While enjoying the winter season, remember to have fun, indulge in some goodies and stay healthy! Don't restrict yourself from having comforting meals and treats – just make sure to have them in moderation. Instead of having three brownies, have one and a side of fruit. Making simple and sustainable changes to your diet and physical activity can ensure you have a fun and healthy winter.

About the Author:
Anna Tran, RDN, LD, graduated from the University of Florida in 2018 and is currently a nutrition education coordinator in the bariatric clinic at Emory University Midtown Hospital in Atlanta, GA. During her pastime, she loves baking cookies, trying new recipes, going on hiking trails and being outdoors with her loved ones.

OAC
Obesity Action Coalition

ABOUT THE **OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)**

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.

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The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

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