

A football is positioned in the top left corner of the image, resting on a lush green grassy field. The rest of the image is filled with a variety of fresh vegetables, including broccoli, green beans, cherry tomatoes, and celery, arranged in a circular pattern around the center.

# Game On!

## Tailgating with Health in Mind

*by Cassie Story, RD*

As the crisp autumn breeze sets in and the leaves start to change from emerald green to vibrant crimson hues, these signs are a reminder that football season is upon us! For many, this beloved time of year is not just about touchdowns and cheering for our favorite teams but also about the time-honored tradition of tailgating and spending time with friends and family.

Whether you're gathering with friends in stadium parking lots or hosting a watch party at home, tailgating offers camaraderie, celebration, and, of course, delicious food. This football season, let's elevate our tailgating game with fun new traditions and a selection of tasty and nutritious treats that will give you energy and keep the spirit of the game alive.

**“ Take a moment to appreciate the aromas, colors and textures of the food in front of you. Instead of rushing to eat, savor each bite and focus on the flavors. ”**



# Building Tailgating Traditions

Tailgating can add a special touch to your game day experience and create lasting memories with friends and family. Whether you're a seasoned tailgater or a newbie, here are some tips to help you build tailgating traditions and make each game day a unique and memorable event.

## 1. Tailgating-Themed Decor

Start a collection of items in your team's colors to add a fun and festive touch, such as banners, flags, tablecloths, balloons and streamers. Unleash your creativity with DIY decorations, including custom signs or chalkboard scoreboards, to proudly show off your team spirit.

## 2. Tailgate Games and Activities

Tailgating is all about having fun, and games and activities can bring everyone together in the spirit of friendly competition. Classic tailgate games like corn hole, ladder toss and horseshoes are always a hit. If you want to get more creative, consider designing your own game stations like football-themed mini-golf or a team trivia challenge. Don't forget to include activities for the little ones, like face painting or coloring stations.

## 3. Signature Tailgate Dish

Create a signature tailgate dish that becomes a tradition at every game. It could be a family recipe, a regional favorite or a dish that represents your team's city or state. Encourage friends and family to contribute their own tailgate specialties and have a potluck-style feast. Sharing food and recipes can foster a sense of community and make your tailgating tradition even more special.

## 4. Tailgate Themes: Adding a Fun Twist

Consider adding themed tailgates to your traditions. Pick a fun theme for each game day, such as a Hawaiian luau, retro '80s, or a beach party. Encourage everyone to dress up and bring themed snacks and decorations. Themed tailgates can add an extra layer of excitement and creativity to your game day celebrations.



# Mindful Eating and Tailgating

While tailgating, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of the game, cheering with fellow fans and eating yummy foods. However, practicing mindful eating can help you savor the experience even more. Mindful eating is about being present and fully engaged with the food you're consuming. Here are some tips for incorporating mindful eating into your tailgating adventure:

- **Be Present:** Take a moment to appreciate the aromas, colors and textures of the food in front of you. Instead of rushing to eat, savor each bite and focus on the flavors.
- **Eat with Intention:** Before filling your plate, consider what foods you genuinely enjoy and choose those that align with your health goals. Mindfully selecting your food can help you make better choices and feel more satisfied after eating.
- **Pause Between Bites:** Take breaks between bites to check in with your body. Are you still hungry, or are you starting to feel full? Slowing down can prevent overeating and allow you to enjoy the entire tailgating experience.





# Matt Butkus's

## Healthier Chicago Ribeye Sandwich

### Ingredients:

- Whole-grain rolls, small
- 1 pound of thinly sliced beef ribeye
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 bell pepper, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup of low-sodium beef broth
- 1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Non-fat Greek yogurt, for serving



### Directions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Add the onion and bell pepper and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the beef ribeye to the skillet and cook for another 5-7 minutes, until browned.
4. Add the beef broth and Italian seasoning to the skillet and stir to combine.
5. Reduce heat to low and let the mixture simmer for another 5 minutes.
6. Toast the hoagie rolls and place the beef mixture on top.
7. Serve with a dollop of non-fat Greek yogurt on top.

## Creating a Healthy Tailgating Menu

Tailgating doesn't have to be all about unhealthy, high-fat foods and sugary snacks. With a bit of planning, you can create a delicious and nutritious spread that everyone will enjoy. Follow these three easy steps to create a wholesome and satisfying tailgating menu that keeps both your taste buds and your well-being in mind.

### Step 1: Choose Lean Protein Options

Start your tailgating menu by selecting one or two lean protein options that will serve as the centerpiece of your meal. Grilled chicken, lean beef, turkey burgers, and even plant-based protein alternatives like black bean burgers or grilled tofu are excellent choices. Marinate or season your protein with flavorful herbs and spices to enhance its taste and appeal. Lean proteins provide essential nutrients and keep you fuller for longer, which can help you avoid snacking on unhealthy foods later on. See our 'healthified' Chicago Ribeye Sandwich!

### Step 2: Mix in Healthy Sides

Complement your lean protein with a variety of nutrient-packed side dishes (see our 10 Healthy Tailgating Snack Ideas). Go for whole grains like quinoa or brown rice, which offer fiber and sustained energy. Create colorful salads using fresh, seasonal vegetables and leafy greens. Try a medley of grilled or roasted vegetables, such as zucchini, bell peppers and asparagus. Incorporate legumes like chickpeas or black beans for added protein and fiber. These sides not only provide essential vitamins and minerals but also add vibrant flavors and textures to your tailgating experience.

### Step 3: Hydrate with Refreshing Beverages

Stay hydrated during your tailgating festivities by offering a selection of refreshing and low-calorie beverages. Infused water with slices of citrus fruits, berries or herbs can provide a burst of flavor without added sugars. Unsweetened iced tea, both herbal and green, is another excellent choice. If you're looking for a fizzy option, choose sparkling water and add a splash of 100% fruit juice for a hint of sweetness. By keeping your beverage choices hydrating and calorie-conscious, you'll ensure everyone stays refreshed and ready to cheer on their team.



# 10

## Healthy Tailgating Snack Ideas



- **Sweet Potato Nachos:** Instead of traditional nachos, try baking thinly sliced sweet potatoes and top them with black beans, diced tomatoes, avocado, and a sprinkle of cheese.
- **Veggie Kabobs:** Thread a variety of colorful vegetables—bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, zucchini and mushrooms—onto skewers and grill to perfection.
- **Turkey Sliders:** Try turkey sliders instead of beef for a leaner choice and serve them on whole-grain buns with fresh lettuce, tomato, and a dollop of tangy Greek yogurt sauce.
- **Stuffed Bell Peppers:** Fill halved bell peppers with a savory mix of quinoa, black beans, diced tomatoes and seasonings. Bake until tender and topped with shredded cheese.
- **Crispy Baked Cauliflower Bites:** Coat cauliflower florets in a mixture of breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese and spices, then bake until crispy and golden brown.
- **Spiced Roasted Chickpeas:** Toss chickpeas with olive oil and your favorite spices, then roast until crunchy.
- **Guacamole Deviled Eggs:** Combine the creamy goodness of guacamole with deviled eggs, garnished with a sprinkle of paprika.
- **Mango Salsa:** Dice ripe mangoes and mix them with red onion, jalapeños, cilantro and lime juice for a refreshing and tangy salsa.
- **Greek Yogurt Fruit Dip:** Blend Greek yogurt with honey and a hint of vanilla for a delightful dip to accompany fresh fruit slices.
- **Cucumber Avocado Salad:** Toss together cucumber and avocado chunks with lemon juice and fresh herbs for a cooling and nutrient-packed side dish.

## Conclusion

Incorporating healthier choices into your tailgating traditions doesn't have to mean sacrificing the fun and excitement that come with game day celebrations. By following the tips in this article, you can create new and enjoyable traditions for tailgating that support your health goals. Enjoy your meals mindfully, savor the flavors of wholesome dishes, and find creative ways to make each tailgating event unique and memorable. This way, you can experience all the excitement game day has to offer while looking after your well-being. Cheers to a season of lively celebrations and healthier tailgating!

### ***About the Author:***

*Cassie I. Story is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist with 19 years of experience in treating metabolic and bariatric surgery and medical weight-loss patients. Currently, she holds the position of Director of Nutrition for Bariatric Advantage, serves as a Peer Reviewer for Obesity Surgery, and remains active within the Obesity Action Coalition. A national speaker and published author, Cassie enjoys spending time hiking and creating new recipes in the kitchen!*





# 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.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

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:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

[info@obesityaction.org](mailto:info@obesityaction.org)

(800) 717-3117 | (813) 872-7835 | Fax: (813) 873-7838



@ObesityActionCoalition

@ObesityAction