



Nourish

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How Can We Make Celebrations Healthier?

Celebrations greet us throughout the year, especially at the end of the calendar year and the beginning of the new year. Sometimes the treats may tempt us to eat too much.



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What can we do to enhance the nutrition at celebrations for our family and friends?

- Incorporate three or more food groups in the menu or snack. Five food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, protein and dairy) are included in the current MyPlate nutrition guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. When deciding on the menu, think about how you can incorporate at least three of these food groups.
- Include fruits and vegetables to add color, flavor, texture and nutrients to any meal, snack or celebration menu.
- Select lean proteins, and use lower-calorie preparation methods (grilling, broiling, baking, stir-frying).
- Choose whole grains for half of the grain foods on the menu.
- Place the fruits, vegetables and whole grains at the beginning of the buffet line.
- Provide infused water as a thirst quencher.

For more tips, see the NDSU Extension publication “3 Tips to Healthier Celebrations.”

What can we do as a guest at an event to avoid eating too much?

Consider some strategies to avoid overeating at celebrations.

- Avoid arriving at the party ravenously hungry. Have a small snack ahead of time. A cup of broth-based soup or apple slices with nut butter can take the edge off your appetite.
- Survey the buffet line or table, and pick out what you really want to taste. Have a small amount of your favorites, and savor each bite.
- Use a small plate or a napkin to gather some snacks.
- Choose plenty of vegetables, fruit and a moderate amount of lean protein. Choose the whole-grain breads.
- Slow down while you eat, and really taste the food. Remember, your brain and your stomach need to communicate with each other. Your brain can take 20 minutes to know you are full.

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Question

I have a good-sized house and my family asked me to host the dinner for a crowd for two family celebrations. I do not have a lot of experience cooking, but I think it will be fun. Do you have any tips?

Having a dinner party can be very time-consuming and can be expensive. Consider these tips:

- Plan the party details, and enlist volunteer help for cooking, setup and cleanup.
- Consider your role as providing the house, cups, plates and silverware, and ask your guests to bring the rest.
- You could have a potluck with a sign-up sheet for items to bring (appetizers, main dish, salads, bread, dessert and beverages). Be sure your dinner has some variety.
- For fun, you could go with a theme, such as cultural cuisine that reflects the heritage of your guests.
- Perishable foods are not safe for hours on a serving table, though. See the variety of helpful tips from NDSU Extension's food safety resources at www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/food-safety

- See the NDSU Extension website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/food for many recipe ideas.



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Charcuterie boards have become very popular. How about trying something a little different? Try making portion-controlled charcuterie cups as a colorful option.

- See the **NDSU Extension “Pinching Pennies in the Kitchen”** series, including the latest publication, **“7 Steps to Creating a Charcuterie Board.”**



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Five Steps to Creating Individual Charcuterie Cups

1. Select a cup.
 - Clear cups will allow you and your guests to see all the ingredients.
2. Fill the base.
 - Heavier food items should be placed at the bottom of the cup.
 - Nuts, seeds or a spoonful of dip can provide a base.
3. Include crackers or bread.
 - Long and narrow crackers or breadsticks will fit into a cup better than round or square ones.
 - To avoid soggy crackers, place a layer of vegetables on top of the dip before adding crackers.
4. Thread meats, cheeses, fruits and vegetables onto toothpicks or skewers.
 - Meats and cheeses can be sliced or cubed.
 - Semi-hard to hard cheeses will work best in a cup, and they can be threaded on wooden skewers or toothpicks.
 - Fruits and vegetables that are easy to pierce with a toothpick include grapes, berries, grape tomatoes, cucumber slices and bell pepper strips.
 - Include one to three skewers in each cup depending on its size.
5. Add additional ingredients to fill out the cup.
 - Possible additions include pickled vegetables, dark chocolate squares or herb garnishes.