

**On Nutrition: by Helayne Waldman, Ed.D., N.E.**

# Three Tips for Holiday Bingers

Just when you thought you'd gotten your diet under control, along come the holidays, threatening to devastate your discipline with all that eggnog, rich food and candy. How do you cope without resorting to total deprivation? Here are a few suggestions.

## **Power up with protein first**

According to a recent study reported by the Health and Nutrition Letter from Tufts University, protein appears to suppress appetite. That's right, in a small sample of 19 volunteers, researchers found that people felt less hungry when their protein intake increased. Could this be part of the Atkins magic? While these researchers didn't delve into that part of the story, its implications are clear: starting your meal with a high quality source of protein like free range meat or wild fish can definitely be an asset in avoiding overindulgences later on in the meal.

And what if you do overindulge? Try not to beat yourself to a pulp about it. Just move on and consider alternatives to those fatty, sugary sweets that are calling your name, tempting you at every turn. It may seem like an oxymoron, but dessert actually can be both delicious and healthy. The next two suggestions involve creating fabulous desserts with two of my favorite fruits that definitely meet both of these criteria.



## **Experiment with breathtaking blueberries**

If you like preparing fruit tarts or pies, why not consider the breathtaking blueberry as a filling? Blueberries are not only delicious, they are gaining a well earned reputation as one of the world's healthiest foods, according to scientists at the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (in the winter months, I get my frozen from [www.vitalchoice.com](http://www.vitalchoice.com)). In just the past year alone, dozens of independent studies have confirmed the health benefits of blueberries.

Perhaps most surprising and most powerful are blueberries' effect on the brain. Not only do they help maintain healthy blood flow, but if the behavior of blueberry-eating rats is any indication, they may help keep our minds and memories sharp. From a study in *Pharmacological Research* (August, 2005) we learn that blueberry extract fed to rats for 30 days resulted in improvements on several tests of cognitive performance. This, according to Life Extension Magazine is good evidence that "blueberries may be

beneficial in the prevention of age-related memory deficits."

And that's just for starters. Apparently, researchers were able to teach old rats new tricks, and as they reported in *Neurobiology Aging* (April, 2005), "short-term blueberry intervention may result in protection against a number of neurodegenerative processes in the brain." Parkinson's and MS are two examples of neurodegenerative diseases.

Personally, I like my blueberries just the way they are, with yogurt or cottage cheese, or blended into a smoothie. But if baking is your thing and you've got holiday guests to please, try creating a delicious concoction such as the blueberry-peach crisp described at [www.whfoods.com](http://www.whfoods.com) --- that *whf* is for "world's healthiest foods, a great website to keep near the top of your bookmark list.

## **Audition an apple**

Your mother was right. Although it took centuries to figure it all out, an apple a day really does keep the doctor at bay. Here's why.

The twin superstars in apples – flavanoids and fiber – make for a healthy holiday choice, whether you bake them into a tart, or eat them sliced fresh with cheese, as the Europeans prefer.

The flavanoids, or specialized plant pigments found in apples, have been researched extensively for their cardio protective properties. In lay terms, this means a 20% reduction in heart attack risk, according to a 2003 Finnish study. Quercetin, the

apple's most famous and most potent flavanoid also provides significant antioxidant activity that supports the body's immune system, providing additional protection against cancer and other degenerative diseases. Moreover, apples pack a two fisted punch when it comes to fiber, containing both soluble and insoluble fiber. These two types of fiber cooperative to maintain regularity, manage cholesterol, and help escort heavy metals like mercury out of the body.

So what's not to like? As you move through your holiday celebrating, keep in mind the wholesome, healthful honorable apple. Include apples in your holiday snacks and you'll not only be a crowd pleaser with taste and nutrition, but if you cook them, you'll charm your friends and family with their down-home, warm and inviting scent.

Controlling cravings during holiday times is always a challenge. But by giving a little extra thought to the treats you eat

and prepare, you'll get through the holidays in good health, and without having to prepare a boatload of New Year's resolutions.

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