

Christmas and New Year Parties

Eat, eat, eat and be Merry. It is party time. Whether you are hosting or attending Christmas and New Years parties, we are all surrounded by lots of snacks, drinks and plenty of food, rememberthe average person gains about 5lbs over the festive season.

Snacks:

It is worthwhile to know your stuff when it comes to snacks. It is an easy way of consuming a few hundred calories with a wink of an eye.

A quickly eaten snack like one mince pie would provide 250 calories and 9-10 g of fat. The same accounts for cocktail sausages; one cocktail sausage provides 80-100 calories and 8g of fat.

Here are a few ideas to combat the possibility of an extra 5lbs:

- Try to keep tempting treats out of sight and keep healthy options to hand
- Satsumas (and that accounts for most other fruit) contain significantly less calories and only traces of fat. So, keep a large bowl of these and other fruit close by. If you are at a dinner party, there bound to be some fruit. Load your plate with more fruit and less of the rest.
- Chestnuts are the only low fat nuts around, so roast a few and leave the salted peanuts to one side.
- Choose reduced fat crisps and other savoury snacks, e.g. Twiglets, French Fries, plain popcorn and pretzels
- Raw vegetables and low fat dips are always welcome and will definitely save some calories
- Dried fruit makes a tasty snack – dates, figs and apricots are good options
- Christmas cake and Christmas pudding on its own contains fewer calories than mince pies. Cut Christmas cake into bite size pieces and serve with a dollop of half fat crème fraiche.
- Avoid missing meals in the busy period running up to Christmas. This leads to overeating during the festive period.
- It is all about balancing out what you are eating; if you do indulge in high calories snacks, have less at your next meal and take it easy on calories the next day.

Drinking, more drinking and being too merry over the festive season?

Most of us are focused on what we eat, spending a lot of time learning about and preparing food. Alcohol is the forgotten part of meals and parties. Unfortunately alcohol is not made from air. 1 g of alcohol contains 7 calories and one unit of alcohol is based on 8 g of alcohol. You do not need to be a boring party pooper, but avoiding over-consumption will save you desperately going on a detox diet.

Excessive alcohol consumption dehydrates you and puts a big strain on many of your internal organs. Even at a normal intake level, alcohol is one of the biggest contributors to premature ageing.

The best advice is to stay within or as close to the recommendations of safe limits for alcohol, which are 14 units per week for women and 21 units per week for men. Whilst partying, remember how easy it is to exceed these limits. Our biggest problem, as with food, is portion distortion. We think we are drinking one unit when we are having a glass of wine, or reckon that half a bottle is three units, sadly this is not the case – a glass of wine can easily be 1,5 units or even more, and half a bottle of wine can be 5 units or more. The reason being, a standard glass is 125ml, which is quite small. From a 75cl bottle of wine you get six of these small glasses. However restaurants and private homes usually use bigger glasses, so a glass could be two of more units.

The bigger problem though, is that the standard wine unit is based on a 125ml glass of wine containing only 8% alcohol by volume. This is a low level of alcohol for a wine. Average alcohol by volume is nearer 11-12%. A 125 ml glass of 12% wine will then represent 1,5 units, not one, and a 12% bottle of wine will be 9 units and not 6.