

Experts estimate the average American can consume thousands of calories at Thanksgiving dinner. Here's how to approach the holiday like a nutrition pro. No one ever said Thanksgiving dinner was healthy. But there are certain tricks to make it a little *healthier*—and to avoid riding out an uncomfortable food coma on the couch for the rest of the night. Know which foods you should be eating more of and which you should only enjoy a few bites of—will help you make the best possible choices. Start by filling half your plate with vegetables, then pile one-quarter up with turkey breast, and leave the remaining one-quarter for starchy sides. Here, are some more expert-approved guidelines for keeping portions in check this Thanksgiving Day.

Start with soup.

Pour yourself a bowl of seasonal veggie soup, such as a butternut squash soup, or a broccoli and carrot soup with potatoes and thyme. Kicking off your meal with soup will help you slow down while eating, and research has shown it may even reduce the number of calories you consume at your main meal.

Go crazy with the right veggies.

Fill up 50% of your plate with non-starchy veggies. This includes Brussels sprouts, green beans, carrots, bell peppers, or a green salad. Stick with smaller portions of starchy veggies, such as corn, potatoes, green peas, and winter squashes.

In charge of the prep? Put colorful vegetables together in dishes and use herbs, spices, onions and garlic to flavor them with fewer calories, try cooked carrots and cumin or Brussels sprouts with garlic. You can also add a healthy twist to classic comfort foods, like replacing green bean casserole with some grilled green beans flavored with garlic and red pepper flakes. Make an array of interesting vegetable dishes, instead of lots of starchy dishes. "We tend to passively overeat when presented with variety, so if you want to give your guests a medley of dishes, have them be veggie-based," Katherine Tallmadge, RD says.

Fill up on skinless turkey breast.

The turkey itself is relatively low in calories if you stick to skinless white meat, so most of our nutritionists don't mind if you eat a little more than the recommended 3 ounces of protein (about a size of a deck of cards or an iPhone 6 Plus, which is 5.5 inches long).

Scoop sides on sparingly.

Choose your favorite "special" sides that you only see around the holidays and keep servings to a half-cup. Stuffing? Worth it. A plain-old everyday roll? Not so much. One serving of starchy sides like mashed potatoes, stuffing, yams, and cranberry sauce is equal to ½ cup, which would look like half of a baseball.

Practice portion control with your favorite dessert.

Most 9-inch pies are meant to be cut into eight slices. If your pie is only sliced into six pieces, your portions are probably too large. One trick if you're trying to cut back? Tallmadge recommends limiting variety—if there's only one type of pie to choose from, you'll probably stick to one slice. Don't feel like additional ice cream or whipped topping is a requirement, but if you are going to finish a slice off with some, keep it to a golf ball-sized amount.

Beware sneaky calories.

You might be patting yourself on the back for bypassing the stuffing and gravy, but if you munched on cheese and crackers all day while cooking, know that those calories add up, as well. If you're hungry while cooking, nosh on raw veggies and hummus or fruit, suggests Tallmadge.

Drinks count, too. Use a measuring cup to pour 5 ounces of wine into a glass so you know the line that marks one serving. Only refill your wine glass until it is completely empty. That's how you keep track. A serving of beer is 12 ounces, and a serving of 80-proof distilled spirits (like gin, vodka, whiskey) is 1.5 ounces. The American Heart Association recommends limiting daily intake to one drink for women and two for men. And remember, the first couple of bites of any food are often the most enjoyable. "Don't waste your calories, but don't avoid your favorite foods either. Eat foods that you love and that aren't available at other times of the year, like homemade cranberry sauce, specialty sides, and pumpkin pie, and forgo everyday foods like chips, rolls, and mashed potatoes." Liz Ward, RD says.

Kelly, Diana. "How to Build a Healthier Thanksgiving Plate." Real Simple, www.realsimple.com/health/nutrition-diet/healthy-eating/healthier-thanksgiving.



Kristi



Damian



Toni



Michael



Abby

Recipe of the Month: Butternut Squash Soup

Directions

- 1. Place the leeks, squash, bay leaf, broth, ³/₄ tsp. salt, and 1/4tsp pepper in a large saucepan or Dutch oven and bring to a boil.
- 2. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the squash is tender, 10-12 minutes.
- 3. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender until smooth (or use a handheld immersion blender).
- 4. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the rosemary and seeds, if desired, and heat, stirring occasionally, until fragrant 2-3 minutes.
- 5. Divide the soup among bowls and top with the rosemary mixture.

Ingredients

- 4 leeks (white and light green parts), chopped
- 1 3-lbs butternut squash, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 bay leaf
- 5 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. fresh rosemary, roughly chopped
- ¹/₄ cup shelled raw pumpkin seeds, roughly chopped (optional)

Prep: 25min Total time: 40min Serves 4

