

GO ON, INDULGE!

This easy eating plan will help you navigate the feasts at year-end parties. **SASHA GONZALES** shares experts' smartest tips.



OUR EXPERTS



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1 DON'T ARRIVE HUNGRY.

If you're ravenous, you'll be tempted to load up on unhealthy, calorie-laden foods to satisfy your cravings. At least half an hour before the party, quell hunger pangs with a high-fibre snack, such as fruit or a handful of unsalted nuts.

2 THINK BEFORE YOU EAT.

Don't mindlessly fill your plate. Take a moment to survey the buffet table, then plan what to eat. When you know what's available, you'll make smarter, healthier choices.

3 VISUALISE THE "IDEAL

3 PLATE". Make your meal 50 per cent salad with just a drizzle of dressing, 25 per cent high-protein foods like roast turkey or chicken, grilled lean meats, steamed seafood, smoked salmon and sashimi, and 25 per cent carbohydrates, such as pasta, bread or rice.

Go for wholemeal bread or brown rice where possible, as these are higher in fibre than the refined white

variety, which can cause your blood sugar levels to spike and crash, leaving you feeling lethargic. Other healthier carbohydrates include quinoa, wholewheat pasta and sweet potatoes.

If you're planning to have dessert or want to eat the turkey stuffing, skip the carbohydrates altogether.

4 BE ADVENTUROUS WITH YOUR VEGGIES.

Think beets, asparagus, pumpkin, peas, roasted peppers and Brussels sprouts - vegetables you might not eat on a typical day. These are packed with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, plus plenty of fibre that will keep you full. Aim for different-coloured veggies so you get a good variety. And load up on the vegetables, lentils and beans before eating other foods, so you won't be tempted to overeat later.

5 WATCH YOUR PORTIONS.

If you have just a little of everything, you won't feel like you're depriving



yourself. Have "tasting portions" of rich foods like duck, pudding, creamy soups and cheesy pastas. What does a small serving look like? A matchbox-sized slice of fruitcake, half a mini mince pie or three small cookies. Each of these has roughly 140 calories. Use small appetiser plates so you can control the serving sizes.

6 TAKE CARE WITH CONDIMENTS. Some condiments are packed with fat, sodium and sugar. One tablespoon of brown gravy, for example, contains 100 calories and 4g of fat. Ketchup is high in sugar and salt, and creamy salad dressings and dips have a lot of sugar, salt and fat. Healthy salad dressings include balsamic vinegar, wholegrain mustard and lemon juice with a touch of olive oil.

7 EAT SLOWLY AND MINDFULLY. This will give you the chance to feel full, as opposed to

gulping your food down or rushing through your meal. Chew each mouthful slowly, and be conscious of how each bite tastes. When you feel satisfied, stop eating or you'll risk consuming more calories than you need and will only end up feeling bloated and lethargic after the meal.

8 LIMIT YOUR ALCOHOL INTAKE. When the booze is flowing freely, it can be hard to refuse another offer of a drink. But alcohol is high in sugar, so you should not have more than two standard drinks a day.

- One standard drink is equivalent to:**
- 210ml of red or white wine (a standard glass of wine).
 - 375ml of beer (a regular can of beer has 330ml).
 - 70ml of spirits (taken with water).
 - 100ml of port or sherry.

Of course, some alcoholic drinks are "better" than others. For example, red wine could well be "healthier" than a creamy cocktail, as it has potassium, iron and

magnesium, plus resveratrol, an antioxidant that has been shown to lower cholesterol and reduce blood clots. Try sangria, which is made with red wine and fruits.

If you like beer, opt for a light variety. Whisky, gin or vodka are best enjoyed neat and on the rocks, without sugar-laden mixers or juices.

But avoid drinking on an empty stomach, as this will increase your craving for high-carbohydrate foods. And remember to drink enough water, because alcohol can be dehydrating.

9 SPACE YOURSELF. If you know you'll be attending two or three gatherings in one night, plan what you will have at each one so you don't overdo it. For example, you might want to have just a large salad and a small portion of meat or seafood at the first one; some cheese and crackers, or soup and vegetable crudites at the second; and a small serving of pudding or cake at the third. **SH**