



## Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Extension Service

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### **More than the veggie tray: eat healthier this holiday season and enjoy it!**

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Leftover Halloween candy. Thanksgiving dinner. Christmas cookies. Food is a traditional part of holiday festivities, but enjoying it excessively can quickly lead to weight gain, as well as unhealthy changes in blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol. But before you go cold turkey this Thanksgiving or toss your Christmas cookie recipes, read on for tips to enjoy the season's festive fare without the unhealthy consequences.

Adapt the recipes of your favorite dishes by eliminating or reducing unhealthy ingredients and adding healthier ones. Keep in mind, it's easier to adjust ingredients such as butter, sugar and salt in cooked dishes. It's harder to adjust them in baked goods since they play a more vital role (e.g. salt and sugar in yeast breads); it may be easier to just use a pre-modified and pre-tested recipe.

1. Reduce fat by using non-fat or low-fat dairy products.
2. Slightly reduce sugar; this has little or no effect on the final product in cooked (not baked) food such as non-yeast breads and sweetened dishes such as sweet potato casserole.
3. Reduce or eliminate salt in almost all recipes, with the exception of yeast breads. Remember that processed foods contain more sodium, so choose natural foods whenever possible.
4. Add vegetables to almost any entrée, side dish, soup or salad. Stuffing is the perfect food for adding vegetables; summer squash, carrots, mushrooms, cauliflower, broccoli, onions and celery add flavor and moisture and reduce calories per serving.
5. Add fruits and vegetables such as pumpkin, carrots or zucchini to quick-bread batters. Try stewed fruit with meat and poultry and dried fruit pilaf, orange sections and dried cranberries with salads.
6. Use the natural sugars of fruit to sweeten non-baked foods. For example, reinvent your sweet potato casserole by using pineapple, sliced apples and raisins instead of syrup, brown sugar, butter and marshmallows.

*Nutrition and health questions? Want a nutrition expert to speak to your group? Contact Nancy Gal, Extension Agent IV at UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service at 352-671-8400 or [nancy.gal@marioncountyfl.org](mailto:nancy.gal@marioncountyfl.org), or visit [www.marioncountyfl.org/extensionsservice.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/extensionsservice.htm).*

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