



HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

10 FLAVORFUL TIPS TO TRIM FAT & SUGAR FROM YOUR TURKEY DAY MEAL

By *Your Health Staff*

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If Thanksgiving dinner is one of your favorite meals of the year, you're in good company. Turkey Day is a standout occasion for many, in large part because of the holiday's emphasis on nostalgic foods, family recipes and time spent with loved ones.

While Thanksgiving probably isn't the day most of us will zero in on calorie counting and portion control, this food-centric holiday presents an excellent opportunity to make subtle, healthy modifications to our time-honored recipes—all by using basic ingredients found in your pantry or local grocery store.

"By making simple substitutions—such as using whole grains instead of refined ones, reducing added sugars, and incorporating more vegetables—you can significantly lower the saturated fat and sugar content in traditional dishes while increasing fiber and essential nutrients," said Leslie Ely, registered dietitian at Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare. "These changes can help improve heart health, stabilize blood sugar levels and support overall well-being without sacrificing flavor."

Healthy Holiday Hacks

With [Healthier 901](#), we've seen firsthand the positive impact of making small, consistent changes over time. To help you fix a holiday feast that cuts down on fat, sugar, calories and carbs *without* cutting down on taste, we've cooked up 10 alternative preparations for traditional Thanksgiving foods:

1. Healthier Herb Roasted Turkey

Instead of heavily buttering your turkey, opt for a dry rub made with heart-healthy olive oil, lemon zest and fresh, flavorful herbs like rosemary and thyme. Studies show olive oil provides healthy monounsaturated fats, which can reduce the risk of heart disease compared to the saturated fat found in butter.

2. Low-Sugar Cranberry Relish

Make cranberry sauce with fresh cranberries, orange zest and a small amount of honey or maple syrup, instead of refined sugar. Cranberries are rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, which support immune health.

3. Lighter Gravy with Vegetable Broth

Replace traditional gravy thickened with turkey drippings and heavy cream with a lighter version made using low-sodium vegetable broth and whole-wheat flour. This recipe reduces fat content and offers a whole-grain alternative to conventional white flour.

4. Whole Grain Nutritious Stuffing

Instead of white bread, opt for whole-grain bread or wild rice in your stuffing. Whole grains are rich in fiber, which improves digestion and helps manage blood sugar levels. Adding vegetables like celery, carrots and mushrooms boosts the nutrient content even more.

5. Creamy Greek Yogurt Mashed Potatoes

Substitute heavy cream or butter with Greek yogurt in your mashed potatoes to trim calories and fat. Greek yogurt adds a creamy texture while providing extra protein and probiotics supporting gut health.

6. Low Carb Cauliflower Mashed Potatoes

For a more substantial swap, replace half (or all!) of your potatoes with steamed cauliflower to cut down on carbs and calories. Cauliflower is high in fiber and low in calories, and studies suggest it aids in weight management and digestion.

7. Cinnamon Spiced Roasted Sweet Potatoes

Instead of a sugary sweet potato casserole, roast sweet potatoes with a drizzle of olive oil, a pinch of sea salt and a sprinkle of cinnamon. This simple swap cuts down on added sugars while providing complex carbohydrates, fiber and vitamin A.

8. Crunchy Green Beans with Almonds

Instead of green bean casserole with creamy sauces, opt for fresh green beans sautéed in olive oil with slivered almonds. Almonds provide healthy fats and a satisfying crunch, and green beans are low in calories and high in vitamins.

9. Healthier Oat Crust Pumpkin Pie

For a healthier take on pumpkin pie, use an oat and almond flour crust. To boost flavor, you can also reduce added sugars in the filling by using spices like cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg. Oats add fiber to the menu, while almond flour boasts healthy fats and protein.

10. Guilt Free Apple Crisp with Oat Topping

Instead of a traditional apple pie with a buttery crust, opt for an apple crisp made with rolled oats, almond flour and chopped walnuts or pecans. Lightly sweeten the apple filling with a small amount of maple syrup or honey, using cinnamon and nutmeg for added flavor.



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Key Takeaways

- Simple substitutions significantly reduce saturated fat, sugar and calorie content.
- Whole grains, vegetables and healthy fats enhance nutritional value.
- Flavorful herbs and spices replace added sugars.

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