

HOW TO SURVIVE CHRISTMAS WITHOUT LOSING CONTROL

With tiny black dresses and huge temptations all around, the party season is traditionally a mid-winter extravaganza that leaves a dieter feeling left out in the cold. The choices available at Christmas parties are often far from fat-free, the atmosphere is usually carefree, the alcohol is flowing and it's a time to really let loose after months of hard work.

The temptation is just to jack in the diet for the duration of the party season, and sort out the damage in the New Year.

Regardless of how much mistletoe there is around, you don't have to kiss your diet goodbye this Christmas! If you were planning to opt for the corset to hold in the curves this party season, why not just make a few careful choices instead?

We're not suggesting that you abstain completely from the fun there is to be had but these tips will help you party on without piling on...the pounds!

Plan ahead! Due to large numbers attending Christmas dinners and parties, hotels and restaurants often ask that you make menu choices before the event. If you make the choice beforehand, you avoid the risk of being tempted with a higher calorie meal.

Alternatively, give them a call and see if they will provide something low in fat.

If you are going to a drinks reception, try to have a healthy meal beforehand. If you don't have time for a full meal, fit in a snack such as fruit, yogurt, salad or crackers with low fat cheese. Being hungry means you will be more tempted to nibble your way through those calorie and fat laden finger foods!

Miss it, miss out? If the meal you are having is a four or five course affair, don't be afraid to skip one of the courses. Missing one course won't leave you hungry at the end of the meal - all you will miss are the extra calories and that uncomfortable feeling of being too full!

Water, water, everywhere! Keep a glass of water in front of you at all times. This will help to fill you up and will also help to reduce the amount of alcohol you are drinking.

Bring your own... If you are going to a house party and know the person hosting the party well, ask if you can bring one of your own dishes that you know is low in fat.

The facts on finger-food Avoid deep fried finger foods like chicken nuggets, cocktail sausages or samosas - one tiny cocktail sausage can have over 60 calories and 5g of fat! Vol-au-vents, quiches and other pastry-based foods are also high in fat - remember that pastry is usually 50% fat!

Vegetable sticks and dips are a good option but watch out for those fatty dips - one tablespoon of mayonnaise or sour cream dip has around 170 calories and 17g of fat. Go for yogurt or vegetable dips and vegetable or bean pate instead - you could save yourself over 100 calories per tablespoon!

Mini sandwiches are a healthy choice but avoid fillings based on mayonnaise. Steer well clear of crisps and dips, as well as salted nuts or else you'll be prone to water retention, which certainly won't match your new dress!

So, go ahead - enjoy those Christmas parties AND feel good!