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Healthified Survival Guide: Thanksgiving Edition

Thanksgiving can seem like a day designed to sabotage even the most resolute healthy eater. While you'll likely be consuming more than your usual day's worth of calories, there are ways to ensure that you enjoy the day responsibly and healthily.



By [Mo Perry](#)



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Fill Up at Breakfast

Even on food-focused Thanksgiving, breakfast can still be the most important meal of the day. Fueling up in the morning can help keep your appetite in check throughout the day. After all, if your stomach isn't rumbling, you'll be less tempted to make a meal out of bites of this from the kitchen or the pre-dinner snack trays. Why not start your day with these satisfying 200-calorie [Huevos Rancheros Quesadillas](#) or convenient make-ahead [Oatmeal Peanut Butter Breakfast Cookies](#)?



Switch Out The Fats

Fat adds flavor and depth to dishes, but some are better than others when it comes to your health. Substitute olive for other cooking oils in some of the dishes on your menu to cut down on saturated fat. And clever ingredient stand-ins can reduce fat without sacrificing flavor. These [Healthified Mashed Potatoes](#) get their creamy texture from fat-free buttermilk, and taste great topped with our [Healthified Gravy](#), which uses broth in place of turkey drippings. **Related:** [Which Fats Do a Body Good?](#)



Maximize Flavor with Herbs and Spices

Salt and fat are surefire ways to bring out ingredients' flavor, but you can also accomplish a lot with herbs and spices, which add complexity without adding calories. Sage, thyme and rosemary are popular herbs for autumnal cooking, but you can also branch out and use herbs from off the beaten path. Try these [Healthified Green Beans with Lemon-Herb Butter](#), featuring the bright flavor of marjoram. **Related:** [Four New Ways to Use Fresh Herbs](#)



Squeeze in Some Family-Friendly Cardio

You know how everyone (or at least everyone's who's not a teenager) is always asking how they can help? Take them up on it: Hand over the gravy whisk, grab the kids (and anyone else who wants to come along) and head outside for a game of touch football or brisk walk in the autumn air. Get your heart rate up for at least half an hour and enjoy your second helping of mashed potatoes guilt-free.



Hydrate

With all the festive drink options available on Thanksgiving, it would be easy to forget to pour yourself a glass of water. But make a point to have a glass before your meal: Some studies have shown that drinking water before eating may help people consume fewer calories, and hydrating between glasses of Pinot Noir is sure to make waking up on Black Friday a little less painful. **Related:** [Do You Know Your H2O?](#)



Manage Portion Sizes

Start with a small plate at dinner and take a small serving of each dish. When you've polished off round one, you can be deliberate about going back for a second serving of what you really loved. No need to waste calories on the dishes you could take or leave.

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Up the Nutrition Quotient

Many of the vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients in a vegetable are found in its peel, so try leaving the skins intact when you make your sweet potato casserole. Eating produce raw, like the spinach, apples and onions in this tangy [salad](#), helps preserves some nutrients that can get lost in the cooking process. Pomegranates and cranberries are known for the phytonutrients they provide, like anthocyanidins and flavanols, making this [Gluten-Free Pomegranate Cranberry Sauce](#) a smart holiday staple.

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Go Semi-Vegetarian

From turkey to gravy to stuffing, many of the traditional fixings on a Thanksgiving menu feature animal products in some form or another. With the right vegetarian swaps, you can cut down on calories and saturated fat; as an added bonus, you won't need to make an entire separate menu for any vegetarian guests at the table. Need some veggie inspiration? Browse our collection of [vegetarian Thanksgiving options](#).

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Offer Dessert Alternatives

No matter how motivated you are, it takes almost superhuman strength to say no to the pecan pie when your neighbors around the table are indulging. But no one would feel deprived digging in to these 80-calorie [Baked Apples with Cinnamon Roll Yogurt](#). If you're the type who prefers to savor after-dinner coffee or decaf instead of dessert, add a few teaspoons of pumpkin pie spice or cinnamon to your coffee grounds for sweet flavor without added calories.

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Relax and Enjoy

One of the best things you can do for your overall well-being is to laugh, relax and savor the chance to connect with loved ones on a day dedicated to bounty and community. Be strategic about your dietary choices throughout the holidays, but don't let stress overshadow the celebration and merriment.

