



Plan Ahead for Summer Feasts

Calendars fill up with all kinds of fun events this time of year, and chances are there is food involved. It's easy to be swept up in the excitement and end up eating far more than you'd intended. Plan ahead to avoid blowing a day or two's worth of calories at one event.

If you are going to an event like a wedding or party where the food is provided, think ahead about how much you want to eat and drink. Alcohol can relax your vigilance: it might be wise to select a couple of light appetizers *before* you have a glass of wine, or even wait to have the wine with your meal.

It seems logical to skip meals ahead of time to compensate for the extra calories you'll consume at the event, but this is the worst thing you could do. Once you get really hungry, it is hard to make good choices and hard to stop eating even once you are full. If the event is mid-afternoon, have a light lunch before you go. For dinner events, have a snack first.

When the meal at an event is pre-plated, you don't have control of what goes on your plate but you do have choices about what and how much of it you eat. For a buffet service, scope out the food choices before you start filling your plate. Aim for a little protein, a little starch, and a lot of vegetable. Decide what you want the most; if the mashed potatoes look interesting, have them and skip the pasta salad and bread.

Sometimes at barbeques there are multiple choices: hot dogs and hamburgers, chicken and ribs, or tri-tip and sausage. Break the habit of taking one of each; choose the one you want, enjoy it, and let that be enough. When you host, make it easy for everyone by just offering one choice.

While eating, use all your senses to fully enjoy each bite. Slow down if you eat fast and pay attention to your food. Halfway through the meal pause and check in with how full you are beginning to feel. *Choose* to continue eating: don't do it mindlessly just because there is still food on your plate.

Be mindful of some of the high calorie, high fat foods that frequent events. Ribs are one of the highest fat forms of meat, so when you have them keep your portion size small. Cheese is very high fat, so are chips, dips and mayonnaise based salads—calories for these add up quickly. Nuts and avocados are healthy fats, but still high in calories.

Summer events can be a lot of fun and a chance to indulge a little in fun foods, but it is even more fun when you plan ahead and make conscious choices. Overindulging is no fun when you feel tired and sluggish afterwards. Choose well and feel great!



A Mindful Moment

I'm always talking about paying attention, but I realize that it is hard to remember to do. Many of us have learned to ignore our bodies, and after a while, we stop noticing the signals.

I first learned about mindful moments from Donald Altman, who wrote the book *Art of the Inner Meal*. He recommends stopping frequently to check in with your mind, body and feelings. I've expanded the concept and included it as one of the tracks on my Mindful Eating CD.

Try it out: take a relaxing breath, and observe your mind. Notice how busy or quiet your mind is. You don't have to change anything, just notice what your mind feels like right in this moment.

Now observe your body: what physical sensations do you notice? Notice your breath; is it fast or slow, shallow or deep? Become aware of your posture, how your body parts are aligned. Tune in to any feelings of tension, any places you are using muscles that are not necessary. Are you hungry? How hungry? Are you full? How full?

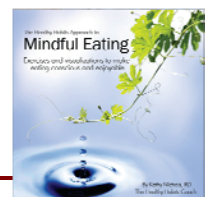
Now observe your emotional state of being. Do you have any feelings or emotions going on? Do you feel anxious, edgy or irritated? Peaceful or happy? Just notice whatever is going on for you right now, without needing to change it.

That was a mindful moment. There nothing good or bad about whatever came up. It is just what is present in this moment. Just paying attention can help you relax and feel centered.

Paying attention to your body and its signals helps you take better care of it. Paying attention helps you eat only when you are truly hungry and makes it easier to comfort yourself without food when you are not hungry. Take mindful moments throughout your day and reap the benefits of tuning in.

Recipe for the Month

Frittata Variation with (LOTS of) Greens
Click the links to the recipe, or find them on my blog at www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.



Mindful Eating CD

Learn more about mindful eating and try out the helpful exercises and visualizations with my new Mindful Eating CD. The CD is for sale on my website: HealthyHabitsCoach.com

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

