

My friend Dan Kenney loves to tell people what I cook for Thanksgiving dinner. He knows it usually gets a very strange reaction that often requires me to tell an elaborate story in order to explain. So when I need to elaborate, I usually start with a simple question. What do you get when you combine a turkey with a duck and a chicken? That's right... Turducken. You see, for the past couple of years I've been cooking this Dr. Frankenstein inspired bird after hearing the NFL's John Madden rave about it during a Thanksgiving Day football game.

Now I don't have time to go into the intricate details about this hybrid fowl, but I will tell you it's not for the faint at heart. Just Google "turducken" and you will find hundreds of sites with recipes, stories and even some mail-order turduckens. However, I suggest Chef Paul Prudhomme and his recipe for an entire holiday meal. Check out www.chefpaul.com/turducken.html.

But regardless of whether you cook a traditional bird, turducken, or deep fried turkey, the average Thanksgiving Day meal adds up to around 3,000 calories. Throw in those "snacks" you'll be eating all day and your calorie count leaps to 4,500. So what should we do to enjoy our holiday, but not pack on the pounds? I'm glad you asked.

Now there's no way to avoid the holidays, or those holiday meals, so before you get your feathers in a tizzy thinking I'm going to tell you to chomp on carrots this Thanksgiving, just keep reading. Here are some simple tips to keep in mind as the gravy starts to flow.

- **Portion control is everything.** Many people lose weight and keep it off with the simple strategy of portion control. Eat smaller portions, limit the foods you know you should, and don't stuff yourself.
- **Don't skip meals.** A common strategy during the holidays is to skip breakfast and lunch to "save up" the calories for a big dinner. This strategy backfires, because you come to the meal starving and wind up eating way more than you ever intended.
- **Never arrive to a party hungry.** A glass of tomato juice or even water, some whole-grain crackers, a slice or two of cheese or a rice cake with peanut butter will keep your appetite at bay. Try any of them an hour before the big dinner and watch your willpower soar while your waistline stays in place.
- **Be sure it's not thirst.** Many times when we crave food, it's not really hunger that's driving the urge it's mild dehydration. So drink lots of water. A slice of orange, lemon or lime will flavor the water and cut your cravings; flavored non-caloric seltzers accomplish the same thing.
- **Begin each meal with a big salad.** It fills you up, provides fiber and is a wonderful alternative to bread.

- **Eat slowly.** Hormones signal the brain when you're full, but it takes about 20 minutes from the start of the meal. Slow eating not only aids in digestion but also gives your brain a chance to know what the stomach is doing.
- **And finally, plan ahead.** During the holidays, try to plan around where you're going, what temptations are likely to arise and how you're going to deal with them. Decide in advance what you're going to allow yourself, but prepare for it so you don't go overboard. Remember, not planning to succeed, is a plan for failure.

Oh, by the way I may skip the turducken this year, Dan told me about something new I might try...trashcan turkey. No kidding!

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