To avoid overindulging in holiday treats, expert advises taking only one plateful per party

By Lisa Eierman
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This time of year we're surrounded by food wherever we turn, whether it's an office party or a social get-together with family and friends.

We all love the special treats that are part of the holiday season, but many of them are rich foods - high in calories, fat and sugar. By the time New Year's rolls around, we may feel like we're rolling around too!

Instead of becoming overwhelmed, we can make healthful choices and still enjoy having some of the delicious foods we eat only this time of year.

When you go to a holiday party, take along a healthful dish to share. Other party guests will enjoy having something lighter too.

Some ideas are a vegetable tray with a light dip, a fruit platter, hummus with whole-grain crackers, pickled herring, shrimp with cocktail sauce and a nuts and dried fruit plate.

Be selective about the foods you eat at parties. You don't have to try everything. Look at all the foods on the table before you make your choices and take your favorites.

Fill your plate with fruits, vegetables, whole-grain crackers and lean meats and cheeses. Then add one holiday treat.

For your treat, take holiday foods that are only available this season, such as decorated cookies instead of chips and dip or other things you can get any time of year.
Take small portions to avoid overindulging. Foods such as stuffed mushrooms, cheesecake and holiday pies can be loaded with calories. So instead of taking a large serving, choose a smaller one or share a slice with a friend. Savor that treat as you eat it, and don't go back for seconds.

Enjoy the party by socializing with family and friends instead of staying around the food table. This will help you resist taking more of all those delicious holiday goodies.

When you go to a restaurant for a party, use the same strategies as at home or office gatherings. Look at all the foods on the buffet before you make your selections, and then choose small portions of the more healthful items.

Brian Crawford, assistant manager at Sweetwaters Restaurant, 1104 W. Clairemont Ave., said Sweetwaters offers healthful choices such as fresh or smoked salmon, shrimp cocktail, vegetable trays, pita chips and whole-grain crackers on its menu for holiday parties.

For a buffet meal at a restaurant, Crawford recommended choosing lean meats such as turkey, chicken, ham, salmon or shrimp. He also suggested selecting simple side dishes such as mashed or baked potatoes, steamed vegetables or salad with a light dressing. Choose a small portion of a holiday dessert to end the meal.

To help control how much you eat, stick to one plateful and don't go back for seconds.

Following these guidelines will help you enjoy the holidays, one party at a time!

At right are healthful appetizers for holiday parties.

_Eierman is a registered dietitian with more than 25 years experience in the food and nutrition field. She has bachelor's and master's degrees in nutrition and is certified as a diabetes educator by the American Association of Diabetes Educators and a certified dietitian by the state of Wisconsin. She is the owner of Nutrition First, a nutrition consulting business in the Eau Claire community, and is a registered dietitian with UW-Stout Dining Services._