

## Party Patrol - Breeze through the festive season without blowing your diet

Health & Wellbeing



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#### Perfect party portions

It's too easy to leave your good intentions at home during the festive season and when you arrive at a party head straight for the chips or cheezels and scoff down the whole bowl.

So why not take a plate or, if you are hosting the party, serve simple, low-calorie snacks like carrot sticks, nuts, fresh fruit, cherry tomatoes, mushrooms, pita crisps and salsa. It

is also a good idea to learn how to count calories by the hundreds so you know the calorie content of that handful of nuts or chips mindlessly eaten at a party.

It's also important to remember - you won't put on too much weight if you overindulge once in a while but if you eat everything in sight at every function you will.

#### Go with the flow

Will it be a cheeky Chardonnay or a sophisticated Cabernet Sauvignon? A Vodka Cruiser or a Stella Artois? Whatever you favour, alcohol will be in abundance during the festive season so try to limit yourself to two or three alcoholic drinks. Steer clear of creamy cocktails (a Brandy Alexander contains 370 calories and has 22 grams of fat) and opt for wine or spirits with a low calorie mixer. One glass of wine (150ml), a stubbie of light beer (375 ml) and one nip of spirits (45 ml) are all equivalent to 100 calories.

Always finish your glass before you allow it to be refilled. If you're constantly being topped up it will be hard to keep track of how many drinks, and calories, you've had.

Or stand with soda water in a champagne glass – it feels special, doesn't go down fast like a soft drink, keeps you sober and out of those family squabbles, and saves on calories, so it's an all-round winner!

#### At the party

Don't allow yourself to get too hungry in preparation for a feast. Eating a low-fat snack like a banana hour before a meal will help stop you from over-indulging later.

Choose raw or steamed vegetables, salads (not drenched in creamy dressing) and grilled chicken, fish or lean red meat.

If you're dining at a buffet or smorgasbord, don't use it as an excuse to eat some of everything or get "your money's worth". Treat it like an a la carte – choose your meat option, a carbohydrate choice and fill the rest of the plate with salad or low starch vegetables like a broccoli and cauliflower stir fry. You get to choose the best bits and the amount that suits you.

If you're a desert lover, have a look over the full selection and choose the one absolute favourite. Desserts are usually in small servings so there won't be too much damage, but eat it slowly, enjoy every morsel and don't go back for more.

#### Have Fun

Rather than focussing on eating and drinking make sure your mix and mingle and focus on meeting new people. Do the Nut Bush, the Macarena or the Limbo – whatever's going on, make sure you join and have fun.

#### Take Time Out

It's tempting to take in every party that's on offer, but unless you want to burn out it's important take time out to relax. If you're feeling exhausted make a date with your pillow instead.

## Christmas Day

Devise a menu which is special instead of serving everything remotely associated with Christmas.

If you're putting on the spread, choose one major dessert. Many people spend days preparing trifle, pavlova, pudding and Christmas cake, often serving up enough for 60 to 80 serves for a family of eight to 10. This will always result in kilos of unwanted fat from a month or more of leftovers.

Use smaller plates, bowls and glasses – research has shown that if you eat off a smaller plate or bowl, you will eat less.

Christmas food doesn't have to equal overeating. Divide plates into quarters and serve turkey, ham or chicken for a quarter of the plate, baked potatoes or starchy salads for another quarter and fill half the plate with salad or vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, beans, zucchini, carrots, cabbage.

And most important of all - Christmas is a day, not a month. Buy and prepare enough for a meal or two, whatever tradition you celebrate, but don't overdo it.

## Hangover Hell

Whether you are at an office party, beach party, casual soiree, a formal function on Christmas day or New Year's Eve, to avoid the hangover from hell don't drink on an empty stomach and alternate each alcoholic drink with water. Drink loads of water before you go to bed and take a B vitamin to help metabolise the alcohol. If you do wake up with a hangover, it's best to keep to small serves of low fat foods like toasted bread, and keep drinking water.

So armed with your Party Patrol Plan, eat, drink and be merry, but do it in moderation.

*Written by:*



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