

Start Some Healthy Holiday Food Traditions

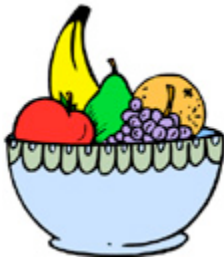
Our holidays are grounded in traditions that are a link with our past and a certainty in our lives of constant change. There is value in holiday rituals. In a new home it can bring a sense of continuity to a transformed life. It can provide order and comfort when things in your life are unpredictable or out of control. For children especially, this sense of order and predictability is important. Then, when kids grow up and leave home they can carry these traditions with them, keeping them always connected to you.

For most families, food and drink is a component of many cherished holiday traditions. Too often though, food traditions can result in some unwanted after effects, such as sugar frenzies, unhealthy holiday diets and for adults, add pounds. When your children are still young is a great time to evaluate those food traditions that you want to nurture and pass on, and those that are best jettisoned to make room for some new, and healthier traditions.

If you are looking to start some healthy holiday food traditions, consider these ideas:



Instead of making food treats for people, make them for the wild animals. For birds, fill pinecones with peanut butter (or lard if allergies are a concern) and then dip in birdseed. Hang with a piece of yarn from a tree. Or, using holiday cookie cutters, cut out shapes from pieces of stale bread. Brush egg white on the bread and sprinkle on some birdseed. Hang outside near a window where you can watch.



Do you keep a plate of holiday cookies or sweets on the table? Consider replacing it with a basket of the special fruits of the season. Little tangerines are in the market and are a perfect size for toddlers.



Select healthier stocking stuffers such as [Earth's Best Organic Letter of the Day Cookies](#) or individually wrapped [Earth's Best Organic Yogurt Rice Crisp Bars](#). Made with whole grains they are an excellent source of iron, zinc and six B vitamins.



Make a healthy food tree for your family's contributions to holiday parties. Cover a Styrofoam cone with tin foil. Put out bowls of healthy 'chunks' of food such as pieces of cheese, grapes, broccoli florets, cherry tomatoes, etc. Have kids put the food into the cone with toothpicks to make a holiday tree. Be sure to make it look festive. Supply some healthy, low fat dip with the tree, such as Low Fat Ranch dip.



After a meal, go for a walk with your family to see holiday displays in your neighborhood.



Make holiday placements. Kids can make special holiday placemats for themselves to use during the holidays. Cut out holiday pictures from magazines, or use last year's cards. Glue them like a collage onto a sturdy piece of paper or cardboard. Cover with clear adhesive paper.