



DO GO IN *with a* GAME PLAN

You may not have asked Santa for a few extra pounds this Christmas, but unless you have a plan, that's exactly what you're going to get, says Robin Anderson, a registered dietitian in Edmonton. "Holiday parties start earlier every year," she says. "And once you add Thanksgiving, Halloween and Grey Cup events into the mix, your social calendar can easily fill up with weeks of food-centred festivities." Want to avoid looking too jolly after the holidays? Here's how:

STICK TO YOUR SCHEDULE.

"If you're only going to a few events, you can afford to indulge a little more," says Anderson. But if you plan to spread good tidings far and wide, you'll need to be more restrained in your approach to eating.

GIVE YOURSELF A (CALORIE) BUDGET.

It's the difference between going shopping with a set amount of cash and just pulling out the plastic; the second option is much more likely to lead to a splurge. The same applies when you go to a holiday party, says Tristaca Caldwell, a registered dietitian and owner of Fueling with Food in Halifax. "If you think of your holiday-party calories like a budget, it helps you decide when to indulge and when to hold back," she explains. "The goal is to get the most flavour and enjoyment from the fewest calories."

- do - show the buffet table who's boss

Stay on the slim and narrow with these buffet-busting strategies

1 GO FOR THE GREENS.

"Grab a small plate of veggies first," says Tiffany Banow, a registered dietitian in Saskatoon. "It'll curb your appetite, and a small plate tricks you into thinking you're eating more."



2 SHARE YOUR SWEETS.

"It's easy to think, I'll just have a taste of everything, but that can lead to an entire day's calories on one plate," says Caldwell. Instead limit yourself to two desserts and share them both.

3 SCOPE OUT THE SPREAD.

Before you dive in, look around to see what's most appealing. Cornell University

researchers studied patrons at a Chinese buffet and found that 71 percent of lean diners "window shopped" first, while only 33 percent of heavier ones did.

4 STEP AWAY.

"Hovering around the food table can lead to overeating," says dietitian Ali J. Chernoff in Vancouver. Her advice: "Move to the other side of the room, or another room altogether." But even facing away from the food helps: The same Cornell study found heavy diners were almost twice as likely to sit facing the buffet as leaner ones.

5 GO NUTS.

A study from Purdue University found people who eat a handful of peanuts daily burn 11 percent more calories at rest than non-nut eaters.



Other studies show that capsaicin, the phytochemical in chili peppers, may also provide a calorie-burning boost. So forget the chestnuts: Get some peanuts roasting on the open fire — with plenty of chili powder and cayenne!

6 EASE UP ON THE SPIRITS.

One too many cups of cheer can rival any dessert when it comes to creating a calorie crisis. Just two cups of eggnog has almost 500 calories. "Stick to wine spritzers, low-fat hot cocoa and low-cal beer," says Halifax dietitian Krista Leck Merner.



do BURN IT BEFORE YOU EAT IT



Ever justified a third butter tart by swearing to do extra cardio the next day? And have you ever done it? Neither have we. That's why it's better to do damage control before you run up a treat tab, says Ottawa-based personal trainer Connie Beaulieu. "Do a short cardio-and-weights circuit about an hour before you have to get ready for the event," she says. While this doesn't give you licence to eat with abandon, it at least gives your body a running start on those tarts. >