

How to Navigate Holiday Parties: Tips from Smart Life

Holidays are on the horizon, and the requisite parties and annual celebrations are about to commence. But this doesn't have to mean ditching healthy eating and revoking wellness routines until resolution time comes in the New Year. There are easy-to-implement ways to successfully navigate holiday parties while having fun, making memories, enjoying the company, all while staying healthy! Here are my Smart Life tips:

Begin with a "pre-party": Holiday pre-partying includes ensuring you are well hydrated and not showing up to parties overly hungry. Having a small, healthy snack before you leave home can offset the dive into the salty snacks like nuts, chips, and pretzels. When you do arrive, opt for healthier choices like raw vegetables with hummus and sparkling water with lemon. Should you choose to partake in drinking alcohol, make sure you're keeping hydrated throughout the day. This can also help offset increased sodium consumption that's common in holiday fare.

Be helpful and bring a dish: Offer to bring along a dish and make that a healthy option. This will give you a solid selection to choose from, but others will also thank you for it! Healthier dishes tend to offer lots of fresh colors, and you can be mindful of sugar, salt, and bad additives when choosing and making a dish. I love to offer to bring a healthy salad, a vegetable platter, or a simply cooked clean protein like baked salmon.

Once and done: Fill up one plate and be done. But know this up front—make your smart choices wisely knowing that this is the plan. Then make the best food choices from what is available, being aware that you are filling up your plate once. Remember

to include lots of color and variety. It's okay to enjoy some goodies –try small bites of one or two goodies and see if that fulfills you. Balance is key!

Liquid calories count: Whatever choices of beverages you choose to include, know that they count towards the “big picture” as well. If you are choosing to drink alcohol, know that lots of holiday cocktails are often full of sugar from fruit juices, soda, and liqueurs. Try to go for a simple glass of wine, or even a wine spritzer (half wine, half sparkling water). If you prefer hard liquor, mix it with sparkling water and a slice of lime or lemon.

Give yourself grace: Beating yourself up overindulging is never a helpful tactic. Fasting, over-exercising or other restrictive tactics to make up for what you may consider to have been poor choices lead to feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem. Instead, practice self-compassion and remember all the positive wellness habits you have incorporated into your lifestyle thus far. Attempt to get back into your routines as soon as possible after the holiday party season and remember that it's the long-term practices you put into place that best benefit your well-being.

The Bottom Line

Health is a journey, not a destination. There will be bumps in the road, and yes, many of them can potentially come during holiday season. Remember that you are in it for the long haul, and this is just a different time to navigate. With the above suggestions, I'm confident that you can successfully navigate holiday parties this year and every year – you got this! And if you need some support in getting back on your Smart Life, reach out. I am here to give you the support you need.

Smart Life Guide to Alcohol this Holiday Season

Let me be clear and upfront: I am not encouraging you to drink alcohol if you haven't been doing so already. But, if you plan to have a drink here and there over the holiday period, I thought I would let you know what the best and worst options are or how to do alcohol the Smart Life way.

In the health community, alcohol is categorized from best to worst by gauging the amount of histamine released and the impurities it contains. In regards to impurities, the "smoother" the alcohol tastes, the better it is made. Remember the tequila shots we used to do in college? We had to get it down quickly to get over the awful taste. That was the "college" tequila – cheap and poorly made (but affordable). You can enjoy and sip a top-shelf tequila – it contains fewer impurities which will make it easier on your liver, thus I would call it a "healthier" choice with a lower chance for a hangover.

Histamine release will also contribute to how you feel; headaches, itching, rashes, ringing in the ears, and flushing are signs of histamine release which would also make you feel sick.

I've put this list for you here, to give you an idea of what might be best for you when you go shopping.

BEST vs WORSE ALCOHOL:

BEST

Liquor

- Clear, unflavored vodka
- Clear, unflavored gin

- Silver tequila
- White, unflavored rum

Wines

- Biodynamic, no sugar (best)
- Organic (just OK)

WORST

- Beer (including gluten-free)
- Cider
- Cheap liquors
- Conventional red wine
- Conventional white wine

I don't have liquor brand recommendations, but I have come across great wine by Dry Farm Wines that the health community has given a seal of approval for a truly biodynamic, low histamine, and no-sugar (yes, this is correct, they ferment it until there is no sugar) wine selections of whites, reds, and rose.