

## The 10 Most Fattening Holiday Foods

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During the holidays, it's okay to allow for some wiggle room in your diet. After all, what's the fun in calorie counting on a day dedicated to feasting? However, because we refuse to believe that your holiday dinner can't be both tasty *and* healthy, we enlisted the help of **Franci Cohen, a NYC-based certified nutritionist and personal trainer**, who offers 10 simple food swaps to cut out excess fat, sugar, salt and calories from common holiday foods.

### Turkey Stuffing.



Stuffing is one of the most filling—and fattening—of holiday dishes. Aside from being mainly carbs, because stuffing is traditionally cooked inside the turkey cavity, it absorbs the turkey juice, and therefore all the grease (oil and fat), making this an extremely caloric food. With a few minor adjustments, however, stuffing can be transformed into a lighter holiday side. Try making your stuffing from a mixture of bread and fresh veggies to reduce the carb content. Also, bake your stuffing in a separate Pyrex container rather than bathing it in turkey fat—this will dial down on excess fat.

### Dark Meat Turkey.



Turkey is a dynamite protein source, but be sure to steer clear of calorie-dense dark meat. Just four ounces of dark meat turkey with skin contains 250 calories and 13 grams of fat, compared to only 150 calories and 1 gram of fat in white meat breast. For a leaner protein fix, opt for white meat turkey with no skin—it will fill you up without weighing you down.

### **Mashed Potatoes.**



Although a holiday favorite, most mashed potato dishes are heavily laden with butter, cream, and other calorically dense and nutritionally lacking ingredients. In fact, a small portion of only a half-cup of mashed potatoes can contain a whopping 180 calories and approximately 14 grams of fat! To whip up a healthier batch of mashed potatoes, substitute whole milk for skim, butter for low fat sour cream, and swap half the potatoes for steamed cauliflower. By doing this, you can bring the calorie count down to under 100 calories and the fat content down to less than two grams. Trust us, nobody will notice the difference!

### **Gravy.**



We all love to

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amounts of gravy atop our turkey and mashed potatoes, but unfortunately this beloved sauce is packed with fat, grease, and concentrated amounts of sodium. It's basically a heart attack waiting to happen. Instead, flavor your turkey with healthy sauces made from fresh herbs, spices and healthy oils as a base. Your body—and your heart—will thank you!

### **Dips.**



Beware of the crab dip! With upwards of 60 calories per mere tablespoon, traditional sour cream-based dips are high in fat and calories. If you binge on the dip, you can easily consume hundreds of calories—and that's *before* your meal has even commenced! To cut down on calories and fat, replace the sour cream with probiotic-filled Greek yogurt. This healthy alternative base for dips has only 15 calories per tablespoon, and offers a bunch vitamins and health benefits that we can all use during the holiday season.

### **Eggnog.**





This festive libation packs as many fat and calories in a single glass as a slice of pizza. That's right—a slice of pizza! Rather than blowing all of your calories on a beverage, sip on a lighter drink, such as a white wine spritzer or glass of champagne. This switch will help keep you in the holiday spirit, *and* in your skinny jeans.

### **Candied Sweet Potatoes.**



Sweet potatoes offer many health benefits, but holiday sweet potatoes are often coated with brown sugar, butter, and even topped with marshmallows (more sugar)! Depending on the recipe, candied sweet potatoes can contain up to 400 calories and 14 grams of fat per serving—all this for just a side dish! Instead, sweeten your sweet potatoes with some fresh squeezed orange juice and cinnamon, and roast them to bring out their naturally-sweet flavor. You'll cut a ton of calories from this traditional dish, and will eliminate the fat content entirely.

### **Prime Rib.**



There are many lean cuts of beef, but prime rib is not one of them. The word “prime” is code for “fattening.” Prime rib has very little connective tissue, and is a highly marbled cut of beef. As such, it is very high in both fat and calories. Instead, choose a lean cut of meat with little marbling, such as filet mignon, and cook using a moist cooking method to keep the meat tender. Soups and stews are a great way to create the texture of a highly marbled fatty piece of meat, using a very lean (and ordinarily tough) cut of meat.

### **Green Bean Casserole.**



Made with full-fat Cream of Mushroom soup and canned fried onions, this traditional holiday casserole is chock-full of fat and calories. For a healthier veg option, skip the creamy casserole and prepare fresh-roasted string beans instead. Flavor with garlic, or roast with grilled peppers for a splash of color and flavor. This is a fantastic alternative to what should be referred to as a “diet devil”!

### **Canned Cranberry Sauce.**



This pretty-in-pink sauce is used as a garnish for turkey, but many don't realize that a can of cranberry sauce is full of sugar, corn syrup, and other added sweeteners. Instead of popping open a can, make your own cranberry sauce from scratch using fresh cranberries. If it's too tart for your liking, try adding a squeeze of fresh lemon juice—this will bring out the berry's natural sweetness and reduce the need for added sugar.

***About the Author:*** [Franci Cohen](#) is a personal trainer and certified nutritionist with a masters degree in both nutrition and exercise physiology. She is also the creator of SPIDERBANDS®. With over 18 years of experience, Franci has been a mainstay in the fitness and nutrition industries.