

# EL DIARIO

## Help the elderly to take care of their food during the holidays

Nurse expert on the subject suggests offering healthy foods to the elderly



They can look for healthy alternatives of traditional dishes.

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Ask anyone who has ever tried to make **a drastic change in diet**: switching from junk food to more nutritious and healthy alternatives is not easy and does not happen overnight.

After all, anyone who is accustomed to a diet high in fat, salt, and sugar is inevitably predisposed to failure (and many cravings) if they decide to quit the habit of eating junk food. Mix the treats, the leftovers and everything of the holiday season and you will get a recipe for a nutritional disaster!

It's easy to worry about the next **holiday menu** if you care for **an elderly loved one** with chronic medical conditions or who simply need to take care of what they eat. As a registered nurse at Partners in Care, I frequently communicate with people concerned about their family members while caring for their loved ones at home.

**During the holiday season, here are two important tips:**

- 1) Facilitate gradual changes in the diet of your loved ones, giving them the opportunity to get used to each change before making a new one.
- 2) Do not stop eating the holiday treats, but avoid falling into excess.

**In order not to lose the holiday spirit, here are some suggestions of healthier versions of popular festive dishes:**

**1. It is not necessary to lose the flavor**

Did you know that a cup of mashed potatoes made with butter and whole milk contains approximately 240 calories, nine grams of fat and 35 grams of carbohydrates? With all its flavor, creaminess and rich texture, mashed potatoes can seem a basic ingredient of the holidays, but [there is a healthy alternative](#) that is becoming increasingly popular and will surely be equally popular at your Christmas dinner: the cauliflower puree. This puree has the same texture and a similar flavor and is loaded with Vitamin C.

**2. Make your table a "no fritter" zone**

Do you love bananas? You are not the only one. This fruit, full of vitamin A and potassium, is present in all the Puerto Rican and Latin cuisine in general. Avoid always eating them fried or mashed. Instead, it saves calories and cholesterol by eating them baked or even boiled.

**3. Change some sauces**

Avoid high sodium sauces and crunchy fries with lots of salt! Greek yogurt and hummus are delicious substitutes and much healthier than sauces for mayonnaise, sour cream and cream cheese; all can nullify the power of vegetables. As for French fries, change them for your favorite vegetable. If celery stems or carrot sticks do not appeal to you, try the pepper strips, broccoli or cherry tomatoes.

**4. It is easy to turn green**

The bad news is that the traditional green bean pans that we find on many of the "favorite" lists, despite their name, are generally made from over-processed foods that are high in sodium and fats. What is the

good news? That there are delicious alternatives to get creative and cook green foods. In fact, some of the green foods should be simmered or sautéed for better flavor and nutrition, and many of these are at their best during the winter (the ice makes them sweeter and more tender). Kale and cabbage, in addition to Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and broccoli have high amounts of sulfur that provide many healthy benefits and taste better roasts!

### **5. This is the season to use condiments!**

In Latin cuisine the food is very seasoned, but not necessarily salty or spicy. For example, sofrito, a popular dish (also popular in Spanish, Italian and Portuguese food) that is made of tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic and coriander and is used in almost everything from rice to seafood. Add condiments and avoid salt adds flavor to your favorite foods that will remain delicious [and your heart will thank you](#) .

### **6. Avoid the cake, but you can eat pies**

When it comes to cookies, cakes and biscuits you face the double impact of sugar and trans fats. Trans fats can raise cholesterol and put you at risk for heart disease and diabetes, so do your loved ones a favor and avoid cakes and most pies. A healthier alternative (surprisingly): the pumpkin pie. Because the big favorite of the season does not have the top layer that most cakes have, it is actually lower in saturated fats. For an even more nutritious alternative, try making a pie base of dates and nuts and completely remove the butter.

To get recipe ideas for the whole year, take a look at the Cookbook for caregivers: [https://www.vnsny.org/article\\_category/caregivers-cookbook/](https://www.vnsny.org/article_category/caregivers-cookbook/)

For more advice on nutrition or other health issues visit [www.partnersincareny.org](http://www.partnersincareny.org) or call 1-888-735-8913.

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