Holidays are personal to each of us. They may be joy- filled or possibly frustrating, stressful, laden with boozy drinks and more. Do some of these situations describe your typical holiday? This year try to keep in mind the ones you hold dear, sweet reminders of why we are grateful and certainly your health.

Knowing some healthy options while cooking or attending gatherings is a great place to start. Personally, I spend most of my time at home in the kitchen on a daily basis. The kitchen is my comfortable place where I take the time to care for my loved ones. My joy is creating healthy food for my guys, along with an occasional special treat. Simply knowing that good options are within reach reduces my stress with food. Do you have a plan for holiday foods and goodies?

**Try these tips this holiday season:**

1. **Bring your favorite healthy or healthier dish!** This will free the stress and over consuming foods you may usually go big on.
2. **Scan The Bar!** I don’t mean at the dance club either. Scan the food bar where all the goods are laid out. This is my favorite tip of all. It’s difficult to choose wisely when there is a mile-long table with choices.Observe the bar in advance for food picks to keep you fuller longer such as lean protein and veggies.
3. **Move away from the food!** When socializing with friends and family, it is easy to mindlessly eat when distracted by conversations. Stay engaged in chit-chat, instead of reaching into the bowl of snacks.
4. **Choose wisely!** Although there may be more choices than you are used to, only choose your favorites. Have some of your favorite eats and skip the ones that are fair.
5. **Keep reminders near you.** You know that old saying tie a string around your finger so you remember to…Do you have a reminder about keeping party time somewhat healthy? When you have a hard time keeping your paws out of the goodies, keep this in mind. Have a go to friend/food buddy to call when need or item on you that reminds you to keep portions in check. A sports band on your wrist, or special gift from someone on your food reaching hand. Try switching your watch hand during those events.

Photo from pet360.com/dog/nutrition

 **Healthy Food Swaps:**

* **Toppings:** Whipped or sour cream, go for light or low-fat version (compare foods at [Calorieking.com](http://www.calorieking.com/)
* **Cheeses:** Lower fat options-1/3 less fat cream cheese, mozzarella blended into cheddar for reducing fat, or feta over blue cheese.
* **Texas Trash/Puppy Chow/Chex Mix:** replace some of the butter from fat by swapping it with lower calories options and higher fiber whole grain cereals and nuts. Do we really need it to taste fatty and damp with butter? Swap candy add-ins for dark chocolate pieces.
* **Chips:** Try adding in veggies with chips and dips like mini peppers and carrots
* **Comfort Foods:** Add in veggies galore to soups, stews, chilies and high fat protein dishes. (I add in fresh kernel corn and canned diced tomatoes to shredded chicken and taco meats to add fiber)
* **Have Dessert:** Make it a special one, pick something you only have during holidays and keep it small, especially if it’s around for days.

**Pick healthier nuts with less fat and more protein per serving:**

* 1oz Almonds=168 Calories, 15g Fat,6g Carbs, 6g Protein (dry roasted/unsalted)
* 1oz Pecans=201 Calories, 21g Fat,4g Carbs,2.7g Protein (dry roasted/unsalted)
* 1oz Walnuts=185 Calories, 18.5g Fat, 4g Carbs, 4g Protein (English Variety)
* 1oz Peanuts= 166 Calories, 14g Fat, 6g Carbs, 7g Protein