Inner Health
Nutrition Consulting

Hello October!

October is a month full of celebration, from Thanksgiving to Halloween! It's a time for fun, family, and of course… food.

With so many delicious dishes around, it can feel overwhelming and intimidating and lose sight of balance and mindfulness. This month, we're here to help you enjoy the season while staying focused on your wellness. We'll guide you to a happy and healthy Thanksgiving with tasty, nutrient-rich side-dish ideas, and we'll dive into some fascinating research on artificial sweeteners and apple cider vinegar for all the curious minds who love learning about how food impacts our health.

Wishing you an October filled with many things to be thankful for!
We are especially thankful that you are part of the
Inner Health Nutrition Community!

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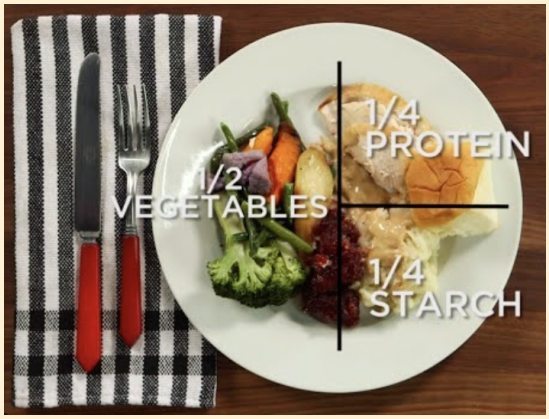
A Guide to a Happy & Healthy Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a time to gather, celebrate thanks, and enjoy delicious food, but that doesn't mean you have to stress about every bite. With a few simple strategies, you can savour your favourite dishes while staying mindful of balance and focus on your healthy eating goals!

Avoid the "cheat day" mentality..."**cheating**" implies that you are doing something "wrong". Instead replace "cheating" with "**compromise**". Make compromises that allow you to include foods that you may not have regularly, but be selective....more on that below so keep reading.....

Balance Your Plate! An Easy Way to visually plate your meal....



- Aim for a **1/4 of your plate to be your protein** (like turkey or tofurkey!)
- **1/4 of your plate to be your grains or starchy vegetables** (like stuffing butternut squash or mashed potatoes),
- **1/2 of your plate to be those fibre-rich vegetable** dishes (like brussels sprouts, zucchini, green beans).

Be mindful of how your celebratory day starts! Do not skip meals to "save up your calories" for the "big meal". Instead, keep to your regular meals to help regulate your appetite and hunger beforehand. Nourishing your body throughout the day is necessary also on festive holidays. Don't forget to hydrate and drink your water throughout the day and set intentions for how you will navigate the choices.

One of my "cheeky words" that I often use in my client sessions for helping to establish balance is **BE PICKY CHOOSY** - scan your choices at the festive meal and decide which foods are going to be plated according to the Balanced Plate above. Choose foods that you will enjoy most or have been looking forward to have. Be selective! Enjoy and savour mindfully.

Be Intentional - Enjoy Dessert If You Choose Too!

Don't fear desserts! You can still **enjoy holiday traditions**

while being mindful of your health while including dessert! Setting intentions of how you will manage the selection of desserts at your holiday meal is an important first strategy! Once again, use my **BE PICKY CHOOSY** goal....scan your dessert options, choose the one that you have been looking forward to the most and will enjoy. Once you dig in, is it tasty? If not, then mindfully move on! If it is yummy, enjoy each bite mindfully! Without guilt or feeling that you have jeopardized your healthy eating goals!

Health is about the habits and choices we make daily, and the holiday meal, including desserts, is just another meal that we can look at with balance, enjoyment, and without feeling guilty. We use food as a **means of gathering and celebration** and to make memories with loved ones, so in a way, that pumpkin pie or your other favourite dessert is just **nourishment in a different way! Enjoy mindfully!**

Mindful Holiday Eating!

- **Rest between bites** to better enjoy conversation around loved ones and to avoid eating too fast or overeating.
- **Give yourself enough time**, usually 20 minutes before going for seconds to let your body's fullness cues catch up with your attention.
- **Allow yourself flexibility** to take home leftovers to enjoy later so you don't feel pressured to overdo it in that one big meal. There is always tomorrow!

Be Intentional & Include Movement - Go for a Walk! (1)

Even **light movement**, like a **family walk**, has more power than you know. Research shows that even just a 2-5 minute walk within 60-90 mins after eating shows reductions of 17-30% in post-meal blood sugar spikes! **How?**

- **Increases Insulin Sensitivity**: Exercise, including walking, increases the sensitivity of your muscle cells to insulin, which helps them take up glucose from the blood more effectively.

- **Glucose Uptake by Muscles**: When your muscles contract during activity, they can absorb glucose for energy, regardless of insulin availability.

- **Blunts Blood Sugar Spikes**: By promoting glucose uptake and utilization, post-meal walking prevents large and sudden spikes in blood sugar levels.

Thanksgiving Sides

Roasted Brussel Sprouts with Bacon and Balsamic

Herb-Roasted Acorn Squash with Parmesan

Cauliflower Stuffing

Cinnamon Sweet Potato Apple Bake

Artificial Sweeteners & Health:
What Research Tells Us

What are Artificial Sweeteners?

Artificial sweeteners are man-made sugar alternatives that add sweetness to foods and drinks while contributing little to no calories. They are commonly used in “sugar-free” products such as diet sodas, baked goods, gum and candies. Well-known examples include aspartame (Equal), saccharin (Sweet’N Low), and sucralose (Splenda).

Claimed benefits

- Using in place of sugar may assist with weight control/loss because of reduced caloric intake (2).
- By replacing sugars, artificial sweeteners may help with glycemic control for people with type 2 diabetes by not causing large glucose spikes (2).

Concerns & Potential Adverse Effects

- Some studies show association between chronic use of artificial sweeteners and insulin resistance (2).
- Results are inconsistent regarding blood sugar control. In some cases, the use of artificial sweeteners doesn't improve blood sugar control, and in others they worsen metabolic function over time (2).
- Artificial sweeteners may alter the composition in the gut microbiome, which if used chronically can have metabolic consequences (linked to pre-diabetes and obesity) (2).

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Because evidence surrounding artificial sweeteners is mixed, it points to how they affect different people differently. We should consider individual sweetener types, amounts consumed, and personal context, rather than treating all artificial sweeteners as equal in terms of their impact on health. (2)
- If you have the option between a sugary drink or a "zero sugar" drink, choosing the sugar-free version in moderation is generally the better choice for blood sugar and calorie control, but keep in mind their potential long term effects if you are consuming them regularly. If you do choose artificial sweeteners, natural options might be safer, such as stevia or agave or ones that have none of these added at all. (2)
- Artificial sweeteners shouldn't be considered as a "free pass" to unlimited sweetness, a rule of thumb is moderation.

Apple Cider Vinegar 101:

When Life Gives You Apples… Ferment Them!

What is Apple Cider Vinegar (ACV)?

- ACV is made by **fermenting apple juice** twice where it is first converted into alcohol and then bacteria convert that alcohol into **acetic acid** (3).
- The cloudy sediment that you see at the bottom of a bottle of ACV ("the mother") is the byproduct of fermentation and is the source of some potential health benefits as it contains **probiotic bacteria** (3).

Potential Benefits:

- **Blood Sugar Control** - Because acetic acid delays gastric emptying, ACV may reduce your blood sugar and stunt blood sugar spikes (4). This may also help to increase satiety (feeling of fullness) if you mix ACV in water and drink about 15-20 minutes before a meal.
- **Blood Cholesterol** - Studies suggests ACV could lower total cholesterol and triglycerides and potentially raise HDL or "good" cholesterol (3).
- **Immune/ Antioxidant Effect**s - ACV may contribute to gut health and cell protection because of its antioxidants and probiotic elements (3).

Things to Consider:

- **Protect Your Teeth & Throat**

ACV is very acidic, and drinking it straight can erode tooth enamel or irritate your throat. Always dilute it. A good rule of thumb is 1 tablespoon in 1 cup of water (3).

- **Potassium Levels**

ACV may lower potassium levels in the body, which can be an issue for people who are already deficient (3).

- **Check for Medication Interactions**

If you take daily medications, it's best to consult with your healthcare provider such as your pharmacist before making ACV part of your routine, as it can interact with certain drugs (3).

- **A Complement, Not a Cure**

ACV may give you a small health boost, but it works best when paired with balanced nutrition, regular activity, and appropriate medical care if you have medical conditions such as high cholesterol.

- **Tasty Tip**

Try using ACV in salad dressings, marinades, or sauces for an easy and delicious way to enjoy it.

1. https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/02/health/walking-blood-sugar-study-wellness#:~:text=Now you can add another,help control your blood sugar.&text=%E2%80%9CIntermittent standing breaks throughout the,glucose levels%2C%E2%80%9D he added.
2. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39339762/
3. https://health.clevelandclinic.org/exploring-the-health-benefits-of-apple-cider-vinegar
4. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39949546/