

Happy Holidays!

Happy Holidays—or are they? According to the media, they aren't—that is, until you buy this item or cook that food. I just spent the holiday at my grandmother's house, where the television was on almost the entire day. I was struck by how all the holiday-related commercials (which are about 99.9% of them) are upbeat with fast-tempo music, catchy lyrics, and espouse an oh-my-gosh-don't-miss-this-one-in-a-lifetime-sales-event theme, or a your-holiday-meal-won't-be-complete-without-Brand X—of-manna-from-heaven.

Advertisers know from years of experience how to excite our interest, how to keep us shopping, and how to spend money we don't have with the right words and music. You probably won't hear soothing Christmas melodies piped over a store intercom. Oh no, it'll be the hip-hop version of O Holy Night to keep your senses alert and on the edge—and more apt to spend.

Every year, it's the same old thing. Spend and eat, spend and eat. And then what happen on Christmas Day? The commercials change to diet programs, get-your-membership-to-the-gym-and-start-that-New Year's-resolution-to-lose-weight-now, and come-see-our-after-Christmas sales. The message goes from "You aren't happy yet" to "Because you regret how much you ate/spent, let us help you spend more to alleviate your guilt."

Happy Holidays? I don't think so. So how do you face the delicious temptations awaiting at the office party, the other parties you have to attend so friends aren't offended, and the big family gathering, without blowing your diet or gaining a few pounds? Here are a few suggestions which help me:

1. Just say no. Determine before you go that you will not eat anything unhealthy. Don't give yourself the excuse, "This is an unusual dessert or it's only made around Christmas, so that's why I'll have a bite." Nonsense. Show me a dessert or other treat which can't be made at any other time during the year. See? So there goes that excuse.
2. If you go to a dinner party, eat small portions. Eat slowly. You'll feel full faster. Again, make sure you choose the healthier selections, or eat more meat and fewer carbohydrates.
3. Don't go to the party. If temptation is too great, then don't put yourself in temptation's way. Skip the party to go help serve food at a soup kitchen for the homeless. No one is going to be truly mad at you for skipping their party to help other people, and if they are, Father Christmas will leave them a lump of coal in their stocking. Meanwhile, you may find new meaning in the holidays by helping the less fortunate.
4. Tell yourself you'll have dessert next time—and then keep telling yourself that. Remember, which feels better: the taste of food or the joy of not being overweight?
5. If you absolutely can't get out of going to a party, spend a quarter hour on the Internet before you go looking at web sites of the world's fattest people. It won't be a pretty sight and it's actually quite sad, but I promise you will be less apt to overindulge with those images in your

mind.

Remember that the holidays aren't about eating. They're about giving and being with family. Start a new tradition in your family which doesn't center around the dinner table. Get out and be active. Make your holidays happy without the calories. You'll be glad you did.

~~Bella White