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Healthy Thanksgiving Side Dish Recipe Swaps

Posted on Nov 22nd 2010 11:00AM by [Kyle Stack](#)

Filed Under: [Diet & Weight Loss](#)

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Your Thanksgiving feast doesn't have to serve as a break from your typically healthy [diet](#). There are easy substitutions for most traditional dishes that can lower the fat and sodium, but keep your favorite flavors. Oregon-based dietitian [Ruth Carey](#) shares her simple solutions for having a healthy, and delicious, Thanksgiving meal.

Sweet potatoes: Use apples, not marshmallows.

Sweet potatoes and yams are considered interchangeable, but they're not the same nutritionally. Unlike yams, sweet potatoes are packed with vitamin A. "[Yams] have lots of color, but they don't have a ton of nutrition," Carey said. "They're high in water."

Take six medium-sized potatoes with three apples. Jonathan or Honeycrisp varieties are two examples of apples, most of which are at the height of their season in the fall. Thin-slice the potatoes and apples and alternately layer them in a casserole dish. Carey advises adding just a tiny bit of butter, brown sugar and cinnamon. Bake the dish at 350 F for 45 minutes or until tender.

Stuffing: Use low-fat chicken broth, not butter.

Carey said that she still cooks her turkey with the stuffing inside it. (Others advise cooking stuffing in a casserole dish to avoid potential foodborne illnesses that can arise from temperature problems when it cooks inside a turkey.) The key to a healthier stuffing is to axe the butter and replace it with low-fat chicken broth.

"You reduce the [saturated fat](#) when you eliminate the butter," Carey said. Although many [recipes](#) call for slices of white bread to form the body of the stuffing, Carey opts for seasoned croutons, which contain more flavor. Add celery, onions, eggs and other traditional stuffing ingredients -- just leave out the butter.

Green bean casserole: Use slivered almonds, not mushrooms.

The traditional way of cooking a green bean casserole by including cream of mushroom soup and breadcrumbs should be avoided. "It's really high in sodium," Carey said.

Instead of breadcrumbs, add flavorful sesame oil, a valued monounsaturated fat. And substitute slivered almonds for cream of mushroom soup or sliced mushrooms, which are in many traditional [recipes](#). The almonds add superb flavor and texture to complement the green beans as well as vitamin E and [protein](#). Saute the ingredients but not so long that the green beans lose their crispiness.

Pumpkin pie: Use fat-free evaporated milk, not whole evaporated milk.

Pumpkin pie is a healthy addition to the table since pumpkin is packed with alpha- and beta-carotene; [fiber](#); and vitamins A, C and E. However, the whole evaporated milk that's recommended in many recipes should be replaced with fat-free evaporated milk. "The whole evaporated milk has butter fat in it," Carey said.

If making your own piecrust, Carey suggests using whole-wheat pastry flour, which adds [fiber](#). "My guests always love it," she added.

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