

THE HARCOTBE DIET
TIPS FOR HOW TO STAY ON COURSE AT CHRISTMAS!

Date: 20/12/2009

From: Zoë Harcombe

Swaps

Have this...	...not this	Because...
(Dry) white wine spritzer	Liquors	The wine has less sugar, lower carbohydrate content and the added soda, or fizzy water, means you will drink less alcohol overall. Liquors can be almost pure syrup, depending on your tipple.
Red wine	Beer	Red wine is generally recognized as one of the best alcoholic drinks we can enjoy. It has been shown to have health benefits, when consumed in moderation (antioxidant properties, for example). It is based on natural grapes. Beer is invariably wheat/barley/hop based and can cause bloating and gas. Nice!
A square or two of dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa, ideally 85% cocoa)	Individual chocolates (Quality Street, Roses, Celebrations etc)	The dark chocolate is more intense and you will need less of it. It has far fewer carbs and will not upset your blood sugar levels. The sugary/milk powder based individual chocolates will have you on a blood sugar roller coaster – wanting another as soon as you've finished one.
Turkey	Nut roast	Turkey is a wonderful source of protein. It is zero carb and has a high ratio of nutrients to energy/calories. Nut roast is often breadcrumb based, which can cause wheat intolerant bloating in many people. Nuts are also very nutritious, but have a much lower nutrient to energy ratio than turkey.
Roast Parsnips	Roast Potatoes	More nutrients for fewer carbs and arguably tastier too.
Extra sprouts & carrots	Stuffing	The extra vegetables will be more filling at the time of eating, give good fibre and they won't leave you feeling heavy and bloated like the stuffing will. Stuffing is very tasty, but it will be gone in 2 minutes. You may not even remember eating it while you're laughing and chatting – is it worth it?!
Crudités with natural live yoghurt dip	Nuts	You will be able to get through a handful of nuts without even realising what you've done and you will have clocked up a high fat and carb intake having done so (nuts are a rare food high in both fats and carbs). You will also then be thirsty and want to drink more. The Crudités will give you water naturally and will leave your mouth fresher and leave you feeling less 'stuffed'. They also give a great crunch.
Satsuma's	Terry's chocolate	Satsuma's are tangy, fresh and very

	orange!	nutritious (Vit C most notably). A whole chocolate orange has almost 1000 empty calories – energy that gives few nutrients alongside. The 2 top ingredients in the chocolate orange are sugar (no nutrients) and skimmed milk powder. You'll have far more than you planned if you start!
Porridge or bacon & eggs	Sugary cereals	The best way to start any day in the festive season is with a 'real food' breakfast – oats, bacon, eggs – something with just 1 real ingredient. Sugary cereals will have you hungry within 2 hrs of eating them – that will be you reaching for snacks at 11am.
Decaf tea/coffee & herbal/fruit teas	Espressos, caffeine drinks, colas etc	Caffeine disturbs blood sugar in a similar way to sugar. If you drink caffeine all day long, you will have energy highs and lows all day long and munchies every time you have a low.
Milk	Orange juice	If you fancy a drink before bed time, milk is calming and natural, packed with protein and nutrients (calcium etc) – you may have forgotten how good it tastes. If you drink orange juice, the body thinks you've eaten a pound of oranges and releases too much insulin to get your blood sugar level back to normal. Then your blood sugar will be lower than it was and you're craving food again.
Crisps with the ingredients potatoes and vegetable oil and nothing else (e.g. Kettle chips or many supermarket own brands)	Dried potatoes with citric acid, monoglycerides of sodium phosphate; vegetable oil; corn meal; wheat starch; maltodextrin; water; salt; seasoning; spices; flavouring; acetic acid; malic acid; sodium acetate; sodium citrate; mono and diglycerides and dextrose.	Whenever you have processed foods – always pick the ones with the fewest ingredients. Your body won't have a clue how to cope with the ingredients to the left. Don't be that nasty to it!
Winter berries & cream	Mince pies	If there are no berries on offer, just have the cream! Cream is a low carb, real food. Mince pies are full of white flour, sugar and suet or shortening of some kind. That's pretty gross, when you think about it!

All of these swaps are with the caveat of Tip 9 below – if mince pies are your favourite thing of all then have one. Have a few! But follow all the other tips and don't waste cheating on everything else that you are less bothered about.

General tips to survive the festive season without putting on lbs:

- 1) **Always go for the most natural food that you can find:** Oranges grow on trees, cartons of orange juice don't; fish swim in the sea, fish fingers don't – think about how nature delivers food and pick the options closest to real food and furthest away from processed food. Good buffet options are therefore ham and turkey slices, carrot and cucumber batons, cheese cubes and pineapple – the real foods. Avoid the white bread sandwiches, vol-au-vents, savoury snacks and the stuff full of white flour and sugar. You'll feel so much better, as well as helping your figure.
- 2) **Try to avoid grazing all throughout the day** Christmas is one of the worst times for regular meals – food tends to be available all the time and "3 good meals a day" goes out of the window. Try to keep some routine and, even if meal times are disturbed, don't pick at things all day long. Assuming that you graze on carbs, your insulin will be woken up every time you nibble on something and you will be in a blood sugar roller coaster of eating, releasing insulin, blood sugar drops, wanting to eat etc all day long.
- 3) **Eat breakfast.** 'Breaking' the 'fast' really is the best way to start the day. Parties rarely start at 7am, even at Christmas time, so always have a good breakfast and it will set you up for the rest of the day. Porridge is perfect – warming and filling and it will keep you away from temptation until lunchtime.
- 4) **Don't skip meals!** Your body should be used to having 3 meals a day, so it won't know what's happened if you decide to skip lunch and arrive at a drinks party at 3pm. You will be hungry before even seeing the buffet table and unable to resist all the processed foods on there. Either have your normal lunch and skip eating between meals altogether (best option) or have a light lunch – a bowl of healthy soup, or a small omelette and salad – before going and then look for the healthy options on the buffet.
- 5) **Don't do any mindless eating.** If you're going to watch the TV then watch it. If you're going to enjoy some chocolate then enjoy it, but don't mindlessly munch through a box of chocolates at the same time as watching TV – such a waste!
- 6) **Drink a big glass of water before going out and/or when you arrive at a party/friends house.** It is estimated that 75% of people are dehydrated much of the time, so they are 'hungry' for liquid, not food. Fruit can be 95% water and even meat can be 75% water, so your body is probably trying to get you to drink if you think you want something to eat.
- 7) **Clean your teeth before going to a party.** Most food tastes gross on top of toothpaste, so have a nice, fresh mouth, that you won't want to stuff with crisps. Put on your best lippy (girls!) and be determined not to spoil your make up, or get bits in your teeth – stay looking your best, because you have sensibly eaten at the normal time, before the party.
- 8) **Just because food is there, doesn't mean you have to have it.** Distract yourself – be too busy dancing or chatting. You can't hold a drink and a plate and be animated at the same time, so don't pick up a plate!
- 9) **Don't waste 'cheating'.** If your favourite food is on the buffet table, then have some and really enjoy it. Don't waste taking in food that you don't need if it's not even what you really want. Don't settle for a tired sausage roll if you really fancied a bit of carrot cake.
- 10) **Make the most of all the ideal healthy food at Christmas time.** Turkey, sprouts, carrots, minestrone soup can all be great meal staples – just watch the stuffing, roast potatoes, xmas pudding and all the really rich carbohydrates – and you should emerge in the New Year just as you are now.

Zoe Harcombe, Nutritionist and author of "The Harcombe Diet: Stop Counting Calories & Start Losing Weight". www.theharcombediet.com

(Diploma in Diet & Nutrition; Diploma in Clinical Weight Management).