

A holiday meal for every diet

Planning holiday celebrations around people with special diets can seem intimidating. But it doesn't have to be.

Keep reading for tips on keeping the dietary drama on low for your holiday feasts.

Communicate

Most people with special diets are used to either accommodating themselves or helping others to accommodate them. You can't help the occasional attitude, but what you can do is thoughtfully ask your guest what their preferences are. If it's a potluck, invite them to

make a dish for everyone; you might be surprised how good it is. Never say that someone will never know meat, dairy or wheat are in a dish. Sneaking in certain foods can make a guest very ill.

Vegetarians

Vegetarians, simply put, don't eat meat. Some people may be pescatarians, in which they eat fish or shellfish. When cooking for vegetarians, be careful what you use for flavoring dishes. For instance, don't add bacon to a largely vegetable side dish, and avoid using chicken or beef broths in their food. Instead, substitute spices or vegetable

broth for a punch of flavor your guests can stomach.

Vegans

Vegans don't eat any foods derived from animals. This includes milk, butter and eggs, staples of holiday baking and cooking. The good news is there are substitutions for many of these products; ask your local grocery store for suggestions. Plan plenty of vegetable dishes and choose salads and dressings without cheese or cream.

Gluten-free

Gluten is a mixture of two proteins found in some grains. It's what makes bread dough stretchy. But

it's not just bread you have to watch for. Gluten hides in a variety of foods like soups, pasta, cereals, sauces, rouxs, salad dressings, malt, food coloring and beer.

Your local grocery probably has a gluten-free aisle or section where you can buy one-for-one flour mixtures, gluten-free crackers and cookies, pastas, and other items to round out your menu. Also remember to avoid cross-contamination.

Don't prepare gluten-free dishes around grain-based dishes that have gluten, and provide separate utensils for the gluten-free versions of any dish.



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Americans gain about one to two pounds during the holidays. While this doesn't sound so dramatic, research shows it adds up over the years. Luckily, there are ways to avoid holiday weight gain.

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