Serve a Healthful, Low-Cost Holiday Meal

Good nutrition doesn’t have to be expensive this Thanksgiving and Christmas season. In 2010 the following menu could be prepared at home to serve eight people for less than $31.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menu Items</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roast Turkey (12 lbs)</td>
<td>$7.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roasted-Garlic Mashed Potatoes</td>
<td>$1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey Gravy</td>
<td>$1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread Stuffing-on-the-Side</td>
<td>$3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Green Beans</td>
<td>$2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta Salad</td>
<td>$4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit Salad</td>
<td>$4.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh Baked Wheat Dinner Rolls</td>
<td>$2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Pumpkin Pie with Frozen Whipped Topping</td>
<td>$3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$30.74</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source of Food Costs: Iowa State University Extension, Thanksgiving 2010.

Reasons This Menu Is Healthful

The food is healthful, because it is homemade and lower in sodium (salt), fat and sugar than many convenience foods. The turkey is roasted, not fried, and a 12-pound bird will serve eight people with some leftovers. Refer to HGIC 3560, How to Cook Turkey for directions on thawing, cooking and serving a turkey.

The mashed potatoes are made with low-fat milk and limited fat, and the homemade stuffing is much lower in sodium than convenience stuffing mix. The wheat dinner rolls are made from two frozen loaves of 100% stone-ground whole wheat instead of white, refined grain. The dough is thawed, divided into rolls and fresh baked.

The vegetable and fruit dishes are prepared letting the natural flavors shine rather than be smothered with ingredients containing sodium, fat and sugar.

- The green beans are seasoned with small amounts of olive oil, minced garlic and balsamic vinegar, so they don’t have the extra sodium and fat from soup mixes and French fried onions.
- The fruit salad is made with fruit, milk and sugar-free pudding instead of cream cheese, sweetened condensed milk, etc.
- The pasta salad contains fresh vegetables, pasta, and legumes (e.g. beans, peas, lentils) with a small amount of prepared salad dressing.

The pumpkin pie tastes delicious with a ginger snap crust and a dab of low-fat frozen whipped topping. It has fewer calories and fat than the traditional version and tastes the same! Another healthful menu alternative is Glazed sweet potatoes (recipe included). This dish uses an in-season vegetable that is rich in fiber and vitamins A and C.

Fruits & Vegetables Are Low in Cost

Fruits and vegetables are more affordable than you may think, so fill half your plate with them as USDA’s MyPlate recommends. Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season for maximum flavor at a lower cost. For the best in-season buys, check your local supermarket specials or visit your local farmers’ market.

The Produce Marketing Association’s 2009-10 data shows that you can get your daily recommended servings of fresh vegetables for an average cost of 42 cents per cup and fruits for 56 cents per cup. Apples, bananas, navel oranges, fresh whole carrots, onions, potatoes, and other commonly consumed
items usually cost less, according to the USDA. That cost may be lowered by buying in-season vegetables and fruits and choosing frozen or canned items.

**Recipes for the Healthful, Low-Cost Holiday Meal**

**Roasted-Garlic Mashed Potatoes**

2 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces  
¼ cup skim or low-fat milk  
Salt and black pepper  
1 whole head of garlic  
1 teaspoon olive oil  
5 pounds potatoes, scrubbed, peeled and cubed

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Use a sharp knife to cut the top off garlic head, exposing tops of the cloves. Place garlic head on a piece of aluminum foil. Pour olive oil on cut edge and sprinkle with thyme. Bunch aluminum foil around head and bake about 45 minutes.
2. Allow garlic to cool slightly, then break into cloves and squeeze each clove to remove soft garlic. Mash on a plate until creamy. Set aside.
3. Bring about 2 quarts of water to a boil and add potatoes. Cook until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain potatoes, reserving some of the water in a separate bowl.
4. Return potatoes to pan and add butter. Warm milk in the microwave for about 1 minute, or warm in a saucepan on top of the stove. Milk may curdle slightly, this is natural.
5. Mash with a potato masher, mixer or grind through a food mill. Add milk and garlic to potatoes. Add some of the hot potato water if potatoes are too stiff. Add salt and pepper to taste. Keep warm until ready to serve.

Makes 24 servings. Serving size: ½ cup. Each serving contains 96 calories, 1 g fat, 63 mg sodium, 3 g fiber and 270% daily need for vitamin A, based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Source: Iowa State University Extension EFNEP

**Turkey Gravy**

2 tablespoon vegetable oil or pan drippings  
4 tablespoons flour  
3 cups chicken stock  
¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper

Directions:
1. Heat oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat until very hot. Add the flour and stir constantly until the flour has turned dark brown. If the mixture starts to smoke, reduce the heat but continue cooking until a dark color is achieved. The flour mixture should be a tint darker than the desired color of the gravy. The browning will take about 10 minutes, stirring constantly.
2. Add the broth or stock all at once and continue to stir until the mixture starts to boil. Reduce heat to low, so gravy continues to simmer slowly for about 14 minutes. Stir occasionally. Add about ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper. Gravy will thicken as it cools.

Makes 14 servings. Serving size: ¼ cup. A serving contains 38 calories, 2 g fat and 68 mg sodium.

Source: Iowa State University Extension EFNEP

**Bread Stuffing-on-the-Side**

½ cup finely chopped celery  
½ cup chopped onion  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, or 1½ tablespoons dried parsley  
3 tablespoons butter or margarine  
4 cups day-old bread cubes  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon pepper  
1 cup chicken or turkey broth

Directions:
1. Cook celery, onion and parsley in butter over medium heat, until vegetables are soft and tender.
2. Place bread cubes in large bowl and pour in vegetables. Add salt, pepper and broth and mix well. Place in a greased 9x9-inch pan and bake at 350° F for 35 to 45 minutes. Cook until stuffing reaches 165° F.

Makes 7 servings. Serving size: ½ cup. Each serving contains 112 calories, 4 g fat and 429 mg sodium.

Source: Iowa State University Extension EFNEP
**Pasta Salad**
4 cups cooked pasta, any shape (About 2 cups uncooked yields 4 cups cooked pasta.)
2 cups broccoli florets
2 carrots, sliced thinly
½ green pepper, chopped
½ red onion, chopped
1 15-ounce can beans, drained and rinsed (kidney, garbanzo, etc.)
½ cup reduced fat Italian salad dressing

Directions:
1. Wash and chop all of the vegetables.
2. Combine all ingredients and mix well.
3. Cover and refrigerate.
4. Toss before serving.

Makes 8 servings. Serving size: 1 cup. Each serving contains 191 calories, 2 g fat, 430 mg sodium, 5 g fiber, 8 g protein and 50% of daily need for vitamin C, based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Source: Iowa State University Extension EFNEP

**Fruit Salad**
Here is a delicious blend of ingredients, but you can use any fruits your family likes.
½ pound seedless grapes (about 1½ cups)
1 20-ounce can pineapple chunks with juice
2 bananas
2 kiwi
1¾ cups fat-free milk (skim)
1 4-serving size sugar-free instant lemon or vanilla pudding mix

Directions:
1. Rinse grapes. If young children will be at dinner cut the grapes in half to prevent choking.
2. Drain juice from pineapple (put in refrigerator to drink later).
3. Peel and slice kiwi.
4. Put grapes, pineapple and kiwi in a large bowl.
5. Peel the banana and cut into bite size pieces.
6. Pour the milk over the fruit. While slowly stirring the fruit mixture, sprinkle in the pudding mix.
7. Let the mixture stand for 5 minutes and serve.

Makes 14 servings. Serving size: ½ cup. Each serving contains 71 calories, 0 g fat, 41 mg sodium and 25% of daily need for vitamin C, based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Source: Iowa State University Extension EFNEP

**Fresh Baked Cloverleaf Wheat Dinner Rolls**
2 loaves frozen stone-ground wheat bread dough, thawed (This takes 2-3 hours on the countertop or overnight in the refrigerator.)
3 tablespoons melted butter or margarine

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Grease or spray muffin tins.
3. With scissors or knife, cut each loaf into 24 pieces of dough. Roll the pieces into balls with the flat of your hand.
4. Place three balls of dough in each cup of muffin tin. Brush with melted butter or margarine. Cover loosely with plastic wrap, which has been sprayed with cooking spray, and put in a warm place.
5. Let rolls rise to double in size, remove plastic wrap, and put them in preheated oven.
7. Remove the rolls from pan at once and place on a wire rack to cool. Brush tops with melted butter or margarine, if desired.

Makes 16 servings. Serving size: 1 roll. Each roll contains 96 calories, 2 g fat, 172 mg sodium and 3 g fiber.

Source: Iowa State University Extension EFNEP

**Light Pumpkin Pie**
This lighter version of traditional pumpkin pie saves you much of the calories and fat of the traditional version and tastes the same!

1 cup ginger snap cookies (about 16 cookies)
½ cup egg whites (about 4)
1-16 oz can of pumpkin (2 cups)
½ cup sugar
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice (or 1¼ tsp ground cinnamon, ½ tsp ground ginger, ¼ tsp cloves)
1-12 oz can evaporated skim milk
Directions:
1. Preheat the oven to 350 °F.
2. Grind the cookies in a food processor. Lightly spray a 9” glass pie pan with vegetable cooking spray. Pat the cookie crumbs evenly into the bottom of the pan.
3. Mix the rest of the ingredients in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Pour into the crust and bake until knife inserted in center comes out clean, about 45 minutes.
4. Allow to cool and slice into 8 wedges. Optional: Serve each wedge with fat-free whipped cream.
5. Store in the refrigerator.

Serves 8. Each slice: 165 calories, 1.5 g fat, .5 g saturated fat, 1.5 mg cholesterol, 170 mg sodium, 32 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 6 g protein.

Source: *Quick and Healthy Recipes*, Mississippi State University Extension Service.
http://www.quickhealthyrecipes.msstate.edu/view_recipe.php?recipe=76&value=Light%20Pump

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**Sweet Potatoes: A Healthful Menu Alternative**

This recipe for glazed sweet potatoes is not a part of the menu, but it is a nutritious alternative dish using an in-season vegetable.

**Glazed Sweet Potatoes**

cooking spray
1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch thick slices
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon brown sugar
½ cup orange juice
½ cup water

Directions:
1. Preheat over to 425 °F.
2. Spray a 1-quart baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Place potato slices in the prepared baking dish.
3. In a small bowl, combine cornstarch, brown sugar, orange juice, and water. Stir well.
4. Pour mixture over potato slices.
5. Cover and bake for 40 minutes or until potato slices are tender and glaze is thickened.

Makes 4 servings. Serving size: 1 cup. 1 cup of these sweet potatoes provides 4 g fiber, 440% of daily need for Vitamin A and 70% of daily need for Vitamin C based on a 2,000 calorie diet, yet they only contain 140 calories, 0 g fat and 45 mg sodium.

Source: *Quick and Healthy Recipes*, Mississippi State University Extension Service.
http://www.quickhealthyrecipes.msstate.edu/view_recipe.php?recipe=118&value=Glazed%20S

Prepared by Janis G. Hunter, HGIC Nutrition Specialist, and Katherine L. Cason, Professor, Department of Food, Nutrition, and Packaging Sciences, Clemson University, 11/11.

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