A Low-Cost, Healthful 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>Holiday Menu That Serves 8</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>
</tr>
<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! Glazed sweet potatoes are another healthful alternative that uses an in-season vegetable 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.

**Bake a Light, Tasty 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!

**Light Pumpkin Pie**
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 1½ 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.


**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. Pour mixture over potato slices.
4. Cover and bake for 40 minutes or until potato slices are tender and glaze is thickened.

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.

Makes 4 servings. Serving size: 1 cup.


**HGIC 4241, Serve a Healthful, Low-Cost Holiday Meal** contains the other recipes in this holiday menu.