Healthful Snacks for Every Day & Super Bowl Sunday

Are you one of the millions of Americans who made a New Year’s resolution to adopt a healthier lifestyle and lose weight? Then you must develop a game plan for snacking on Super Bowl Sunday. This event, which takes place on February 3, is one of the worst eating days of 2013. A typical party menu includes beer, soft drinks, sandwiches, pizza, wings, potato chips, nachos and cheese sauce, potato salad and other fatty foods.

Whether you’re hosting a party or preparing food to take to someone else’s party, choose snacks that are minimally processed, high in fiber and low in fat and added sugars. This includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins (e.g. white breast meat of poultry without skin, beans and seafood) and fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products.

Think Small Plates
Small plates are a mealtime tradition among many Mediterranean countries, where a heart-healthy eating plan consists primarily of plant-based foods (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices), and olive oil and canola oil replace butter, margarine and other unhealthy fats.

Here are some advantages to downsizing from a dinner plate to a salad plate at parties and buffets.

- You can eat less and save about half the calories.
- A small plate looks full so you don’t feel cheated.
- It encourages portion control. You take smaller portions and eat only the foods you really like.
- You can clean your plate and feel satisfied without overeating.

Practice Mindful Eating
Eat slowly and take time to enjoy the taste and textures of foods. Pay attention to how you feel. Instead of mindlessly eating hundreds—even thousands—of calories while watching the football game, use hunger and fullness cues to recognize when you’ve had enough. Before going back for seconds, wait 20 minutes for your food to “settle.” It takes that long for your stomach to tell your brain that you’re full.

Although it seems messy and unappetizing, you may want to let empty beverage containers, chicken bones, etc. accumulate on the table to remind you of how much you have consumed. Researchers at Cornell University noted that people might eat and drink much more when there are no visual clues about how much they have consumed. Researchers also observed that people take less food from a smaller bowl.

Prepare Healthier Appetizers, Dips & Sauces
Healthful snacking is part of a nutritious diet and may prevent overeating by maintaining your blood glucose levels. It starts with eating more vegetables and fruits, fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products, and smaller portions of protein and grains. Half your plate should be fruits and vegetables, and the other half should be ¼ lean protein and ¼ whole grain. To learn more, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Preparing food at home makes it easier to control what is in your snacks, but you don’t have to spend all day in the kitchen. Buy a variety of pre-cut vegetables and fruits and some low-fat dips, or make your own dips using fat-free or low-fat sour cream, mayonnaise or plain yogurt. The pre-made
trays usually come with regular high-fat dip. Dipping companions include healthy chips (e.g. baked, pita, sweet potato and kale), pretzels and whole grain crackers. These are good replacements for a bag of regular chips or Cheetos®, for example.

Another tasty, healthy snack is air-popped or low-fat microwave popcorn topped with seasonings or a colored sugar. But, skip the salt and butter!

Here are some snacks that you can make a day ahead of time and store covered in the refrigerator.

**Dips & Fresh Veggie Plates**
Choose six or seven fresh vegetables and two low-fat dips. Serve them on a variety of small dishes placed around the room to generate interest and to encourage people to eat more of them.

**Veggies With Hummus**
Hummus is a more healthful dip than a creamy, high-fat ranch dressing. Mix hummus from the grocery store with some tomato paste for a nice red color. Spoon the mixture into a small cup and surround it with a variety of fresh vegetables (e.g. grape tomatoes, celery, broccoli).

To make homemade hummus, grind these ingredients in a food processor or blender: two cans of rinsed chickpeas, a roasted red pepper, a couple of garlic cloves and lemon juice to taste.

**Chips & Homemade Salsa**
If you are going to serve chips, choose baked, whole-grain or pita chips. Offer the chips with salsa so that more vegetables will be eaten. You can make a quick homemade salsa by blending no-salt-added canned tomatoes with a little hot pepper sauce. This salsa also is delicious with fresh veggies or warm rolled corn tortillas.

**Baked Tortilla Chips**
To save money, make your own baked chips. Cut flour or corn tortillas into quarters. Mist with water or cooking spray and sprinkle with the seasoning of your choice (e.g. paprika, onion powder or cumin). Bake tortilla wedges in a single layer on a baking pan at 350 °F for about 15 minutes or until crisp. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Enjoy with your favorite salsa or bean dip.

**Tomato Pinwheels**
2 small flour tortillas, low in fat and sodium
4 tablespoons prepared hummus
½ cup diced tomatoes
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
Spread 2 tablespoons hummus on each tortilla. Sprinkle diced tomatoes at the edge. Roll the tortilla up tightly, with the tomatoes in the center. Cut in 1-inch pinwheels. Place pinwheels on a platter with the cherry tomato halves in the center. Serves 4.

You also can make pinwheels by coating flour tortillas with spreads made from black beans, feta cheese and veggies, peanut butter and fruit, etc. Use your imagination and creativity.

**Avocado Tofu Dip**
1 large avocado, halved and mashed*
8 ounces firm tofu
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ cup chunky salsa
Combine first 4 ingredients in blender or food processor until smooth. Add salsa. Serve with baked chips, fresh vegetables or Mexican dishes. Makes 2 cups.

*Avocados contain fat, but it is the heart healthy monounsaturated fat. Limit your portions, because avocados are still high in calories.

**Cowboy Caviar**
This spicy bean salsa makes a healthful, low-fat party dip.
1 cup frozen-thawed black-eyed peas
15 ounces canned black beans, drained
1 cup frozen-thawed corn kernels
½ cup chopped green onion
½ cup chopped bell pepper
1 diced jalapeno pepper (optional)
14 ounces canned diced no-salt-added tomatoes, drained
1 tablespoon vinegar
Combine all ingredients in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Serve salsa with an assortment of raw vegetables and baked chips.
Makes 10 servings. Serving size: ½ cup. Each serving contains 60 calories, 0 fat, 0 cholesterol, 97 mg sodium, 3 g fiber, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g protein.
Apple & Dried Fruit Platter
Core and slice several apples, or buy apple wedges from the grocery store if you are in a hurry. Serve on a small colorful plate surrounded by a variety of dried fruits (e.g. cranberries, blueberries, figs, and plums).

Fruit & Cheese Plate
Serve fruit with cube-size amounts of low-fat cheeses instead of the full-fat versions. And, skip the crackers!

Boneless Wings
Baked, boneless chicken breast strips are a healthier alternative to chicken wings. Make your own boneless wings by dredging chicken strips in buttermilk (fat-free) and hot sauce to taste. Coat chicken strips in whole-wheat flour, to which a small amount of cornmeal has been added. Bake in the oven instead of frying. Serve with fat-free barbecue sauce.

Shrimp Cocktail
Chill cooked shrimp and serve with a spicy cocktail sauce. One large shrimp contains about 1 gram of protein and only 5 calories. Proteins take longer to digest, which keeps you satisfied longer.

Sip Smarter
What you drink is as important as what you eat, because beverages can easily add extra calories. Here are some tips to make better beverage choices.

- Drink water or other calorie-free beverages, as well as 100% juice. Sugar-sweetened soft drinks and other sweet drinks contain a lot of sugar and are high in calories.
- When water just won’t do, enjoy the beverage of your choice, but cut back on the amount. Select a smaller cup, glass or can instead of a large or supersized option.
- Alcohol contains almost as many calories per gram as fat does. It may increase your appetite, yet it reduces the number of fat calories you burn for energy. Research also shows that alcohol lowers testosterone levels for up to 24 hours after drinking.
- If you drink beer, choose a light beer.
- If you prefer a mixed drink, try cranberry juice with a splash of vodka, which is a lighter alcohol with fewer toxins.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with a glass of water. If you’ve had several drinks and the party isn’t at your house, it’s also a good idea to assign a designated driver or take a cab home.

Keep Foods Safe
- Rinse fresh vegetables and fruits under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. Even if you plan to peel or cut the produce before eating, it is important to thoroughly rinse it first to prevent microbes from transferring from the outside to the inside of the produce.
- Always use a clean cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw seafood, meat and poultry. Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw food.
- Freeze or refrigerate meat within two hours of purchase.
- Cook food to safe internal temperatures. Cook all poultry, including ground turkey and chicken, to an internal temperature of 165 °F. When grilling burgers, make sure the internal temperature of the meat is at least 160 °F to ensure the meat is fully cooked. Since the thickness of homemade burgers can vary, use a food thermometer for accuracy (www.isitdoneyet.gov).
- Hold cold foods at 40 °F or below, and keep hot foods at 140 °F or above. Foods are no longer safe to eat when they have been in the danger zone between 40-140 °F for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature was above 90 °F).
- Hummus, guacamole, ranch, spinach, and other creamy dips should not be held at room temperature for more than two hours. To increase the time dip can be left out, nest the dip container in a bowl of ice. Otherwise, keep smaller amounts of dip in the fridge and replenish at intervals.

Sources:
4. Clemson University Cooperative Extension. HGIC 4092, Control Holiday Weight Gain.