



# K-State Extension Connection

## Focus on the “Stars”...Healthier Holiday Cooking

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“Healthy” and “Holiday” don’t usually find themselves in the same sentence when discussing food. That doesn’t have to be the case, though! Even though research shows a distinct correlation between our food choices and our risk of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease, that doesn’t mean you have to eat flavorless food and give up enjoying all of your favorite foods for the holidays.

**Each of our favorite holiday dishes – such as candied sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, and pumpkin pie -- begin with a very healthy main ingredient. Large amounts of added fats and sugars cause the recipe to become less healthy!**



**To create a healthier dish, try concentrating on the “Star” ingredient.**

For example, consider the apple which is the star ingredient of apple pie. Most apples have a sweet taste all by themselves and about seventy calories for a medium apple. However, if you go to the store to purchase applesauce, you often find applesauce that has around 170 calories per cup. Close examination of the applesauce Ingredients Label will reveal some type of added sugar. **Taking the time to look further and purchase applesauce with no added sugar can save you around sixty to seventy calories per cup.** As great as apples taste, is that added sugar really necessary?

Apple Crisp or baked apples can be a healthier alternative to traditional apple pie at holiday time or any time. Both of these eliminate the crust which is a large calorie reduction since the typical crust on a one-crust pie per serving is around 120 calories (1/8 of 9” pie). A double-crust pie has even more calories and fat.

**Traditional apple pie can have up to 459 calories per slice but a very tasty Fall Apple Crisp can be baked for around 190 calories per serving saving you 269 calories.** It would take over two miles of walking to burn off those extra 269 calories.

In addition, preparing the traditional Thanksgiving favorite pumpkin pie with a **ginger snap crust instead of the regular crust saves approximately 115 calories per slice and 9.5 grams of fat**. This “lighter” pumpkin pie still has wonderful, satisfying flavor try.

A few simple changes to the traditional Green Bean Casserole, such as using reduced-fat cream of mushroom soup, can **save around 60 calories and five grams of fat per serving over the traditional version**. Most taste testers notice little difference in flavor between the two recipes.

It may sound like 100 calories here or 80 calories there is not a big deal, but think about this. Americans typically gain one to three pounds (or more) between Thanksgiving and the New Year. This may not sound like a lot, but, many of us don't lose that excess weight. Over time this little bit of excess can add up to ten or fifteen extra pounds or more and increase our risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes or heart disease. **So saving a few calories per serving in each of several holiday dishes can go a long way toward keeping your family members in a healthy weight range and reducing the risk of chronic disease**. And, if calories can be eliminated without sacrificing flavor, it just might be worth starting a new holiday recipe tradition.

**A copy of the K-State Publication “Focus On the ‘Stars’: Cooking Healthy for the Holidays”, along with delicious recipes for “lighter” versions of some traditional holiday favorite foods is free for download at: <https://www.wildcatdistrict.k-state.edu/featured-topics/food-family/index.html>**. You will also find additional tips for altering other recipes for better health.

Find more information on these and other topics by contacting the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Girard, 620-724-8233; Altamont, 620-784-5337; Independence, 620-331-2690; Fredonia, 620-378-2167; Pittsburg, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district](http://www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district).

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