

# Simplicity for the Holidays

By Sara Colman Carlson, RDN, CDE

2020! Need I say more? It's been a year of drastic change, loss of jobs, income, social interactions, routines, education, and even friends and loved ones. The last thing we need to end the year is a stressful holiday season. My challenge to you is to simplify your holiday gifting and meals. Checkout the tips below and add your own to the list.

**Gifting:** Instead of buying things consider a homemade gift from the kitchen. Explore healthy recipe options, such as several you likely have from the Balanced Habits™ KICK START program or Balanced Habits™ FudStar Recipe Site.

1. Recipe in a jar –layer dry ingredients for soup, chili, muffins
2. Meal in a basket –pasta, sauce and a wedge of aged parmesan cheese; salad dressing mixes, flavored vinegars, olive oil and croutons; meat, cheese & fruit
3. Chocolate –drink mix, fudge, candies, chocolate dipped fruit
4. Spiced nuts, flavored popcorn, or homemade snack mix
5. Cookies –add oats, flax, chia seeds, whole grain flour, nuts and dried fruit for extra nutrients and fiber
6. Muffins, loaf bread, rolls
7. Breakfast bars, granola
8. Seasoning blends
9. Homemade-- jam, mustard, salad dressing, pasta sauce
10. Herbal tea or specialty coffee with a fun mug

**Holiday Meals:** Instead of the traditional meal with all the trimmings, scale down to a simple meal. Due to the increase in COVID-19 spread, many of us will have a much smaller gathering for the holidays. Try some of these tips:

1. Roast a turkey breast instead of a whole bird.
2. Go for heat and eat ham or simple marinated pork tenderloin. Leftovers are great for sandwiches.
3. Buy prepared cranberry relish instead of homemade or canned sauce.
4. Sprinkle a crumb topping over fresh green beans instead of a green bean casserole.
5. Bake sweet or white potatoes instead of mashed or casserole potatoes.
6. Make simple sheet pan roasted veggies tossed with olive oil and herbs--winter squash, Brussels sprouts, carrots, parsnips, turnips.
7. Replace sweet desserts with fresh fruit—citrus segments with pomegranate seeds, mixed fresh berries, diced apples with dried cranberries, yogurt and berry trifle,
8. Dress up a simple lettuce or spinach salad with nuts, pomegranate seeds, dried cranberries, grapes or mandarin oranges.

**Connecting:** Find a new way to connect with loved ones: In addition to Zoom, House Party and other connecting apps consider these:

1. Send a card—mail or electronic. Try an app like Givingli, Punkpost or Ink Cards.
2. Write a holiday letter to include with your holiday cards.
3. Write personal letters to connect with special people in your life.
4. Make a video to share—a holiday greeting, exercise, yoga, meditation, share a joke or funny story, or share special milestones.

Pick out the items above you will embrace to help simplify your December. Bring in the end of 2020 with less stress and more relaxation!