



Performance Foods And Fun Foods During The Holidays!

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This year make the most of the holiday season while optimizing your performance. Many gymnasts (and coaches) have forbidden “bad” foods that are often plentiful during the holidays. Goodies such as fudge, candy and cookies taste good for the moment but, because we have labeled them bad foods, they often leave us feeling guilty about ourselves if we eat them. Likewise, if we stick to the “good” foods like fruits, vegetables, turkey and mashed potatoes, we pat ourselves on the back and take pride in our discipline. (Even though we would still love to have a taste of the pumpkin pie!)

Let's be realistic! What would the holiday season be like if we didn't indulge and enjoy those special seasonal treats? Believe it or not, there is a way to enjoy the tastes of the season and still maintain a disciplined healthy attitude toward food. Here's how.

First, erase the good food/bad food mentality. This philosophy is nutritionally inaccurate, so throw it out! Instead, identify foods as “Performance Foods” and “Fun Foods.” Performance foods make you a better gymnast, while fun foods give you a healthy attitude toward eating.

What is a Performance Food?

Performance foods may be high in carbohydrates to give you energy to fuel your workouts. They may also include protein to build strength and build and repair muscles. Some performance foods also have a little fat, which is important for nerve transmission and proper growth. Most importantly, performance foods are packed with valuable vitamins and/or minerals to make everything in your body perform like clockwork. Vitamins and minerals do not provide energy themselves, but help the body convert food into fuel.

What is a Fun Food?

Remember food is fuel, but food still needs to be fun. If your food doesn't measure up to the performance food criteria and is high in simple sugar or fat with little or no vitamins, then it is a fun food. Fun foods provide balance to the overall diet and satisfy our body's natural (and healthy) craving for certain tastes. See the examples of holiday Performance and Fun Foods listed below.

Balancing Performance and Fun Foods

Remember that “Nutrition Conditioning” is all about balancing food choices. During the holidays, try to keep performance foods at 80% of your diet and the

remaining 20% can be fun foods. Here are a few guidelines to follow so all foods fit into your diet. You will still be able to enjoy your fun foods while remaining a high performance machine throughout the holiday season.

Nutrition Conditioning Throughout the Holidays

- Maintain a normal eating schedule. If you are going to a party at the gym after practice, do not skip meals to save room. This will cause you to eat too many fun foods.
- Enjoy fun foods after you have your performance foods. Remember you are an athlete first and your body needs nutrients for fuel and performance.
- Trust your body to eat when hungry and stop when full.
- View food as fuel and not something to fear or resist.
- Healthy eating is flexible and may vary with your holiday schedule, emotions and hunger.
- Healthy eating takes time and planning.
- Remember to add color to your meal. The more orange, yellow, green and red foods you include in your diet, the more nutrition you'll have to be a high performance machine.
- Most importantly, don't let your food choices on a given day dictate how you feel about yourself. Your value comes not in what you eat or how much you eat but in the unique and wonderful qualities you have as a person.

Holiday Performance Foods

Tasty Turkey
Candied Sweet Potatoes
Carrot Slices
Green Beans
Broccoli Spears
Healthy Ham or Roast
Beef
Cranberries
Stuffing
Nuts
Cheese and Crackers



Holiday Fun Food

Fudge
Pumpkin Pie
Chocolate Candy
Gingerbread Cookies
Candy Canes
Egg Nog
Apple Cider
Whipped Cream

Holiday Pumpkin Muffin



This holiday recipe combines great carbohydrates of a performance food with some yummy toppings to make it a fun food as well.

1/2 cup Egg Beaters
1 cup canned pumpkin
3/4 cup skim milk
2 cups all purpose flour
2 tsp. Pumpkin pie spice
3 tsp. baking powder
1/2 cup applesauce
3/4 cup raisins
Cream cheese frosting

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Mix egg product, applesauce, milk, pumpkin and raisins. Stir flour, pumpkin spice and baking powder until flour is moistened. Batter should be a little lumpy. Spoon batter into greased muffin cups and bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes.

Spread cream cheese frosting and top with your favorite fun food. (Try dried cranberries, blueberries or holiday M&M's.)

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