



How to Enjoy Christmas Treats Whilst Following a Special Diet

Christmas brings with it the usual festive treats, Christmas cake, Christmas pudding and mince pies but what do I do if I'm on a special diet? Here are some tips when making these products that can help you to stick to your diet.

There's good news all round as most recipes can be altered slightly so you can follow your diet and still enjoy the festive treats. Remember all of the treats are high in calories so if you are trying to watch your weight, limit your intake and be sure to exercise regularly.

Gluten Free Diets

Most recipes will require flour and there are a wide range of gluten free flours on the market and all of these are suitable. Many of the companies will also have recipes for these available on their websites so it's worth checking them out.

Watch out also for recipes containing beers, lagers, ales and stouts as these are not gluten free and should be avoided. Adding fresh orange juice with added whiskey or cider can add flavour instead. Spirits, wine and cider are gluten free and can be used as alternatives.

As a general rule all spices including mixed spices are gluten free as long as these are pure ingredients with nothing added but some may contain wheat flour as filler so as always it's important to check the labels.

When adding ingredients such as breadcrumbs to puddings ensure they are gluten free.

Remember 'cross contamination' when you are preparing your food and also when storing your products.

The Irish Coeliac Society provides people with an up to date list of gluten free products so be sure to join annually.

Diabetes

Many recipes will contain added sugar and this can be reduced by adding extra dried fruit which will naturally sweeten the food, and ensure a slow release of sugar to the blood stream.

Using some wholemeal brown flour can also help by increasing the fibre and again slowing down the release of sugar.

Sugar free sweeteners can also be used but be sure you choose one that's suitable for cooking as some get a bitter after taste when heated to high temperatures.

For those with diabetes its best to avoid icing on your cake as this has large amounts of sugar in it. Small amounts of marzipan can be used and decorate with chopped fruit /nuts.

Diabetic cakes and other products are best avoided as they are often high in fat instead eat a small amount of the 'normal' version.

Healthy Heart

People with raised cholesterol need to reduce their overall fat intake and to change the type of fat they eat.



By baking your own products you are in complete control as to what goes into the recipe. This is particularly important as much shop bought varieties can have Trans fats added to them. Where butter or margarine are listed use either a polyunsaturated or monounsaturated spread that is suitable for cooking. Some will not tolerate high temperatures so check the packaging. Sunflower oil can also be added to some recipes instead of either margarine or butter.

Eggs also contain cholesterol but as the concentration will be small overall it's not a big concern.

High fibre

Dried fruits are all high in fibre but replacing some of the white flour with wholemeal varieties to your recipe will also boost fibre content. Adding extra nuts and using brown breadcrumbs where possible will also help.

Top Tips

Gluten Free

- Use gluten free flours/bread mixes
- Avoid beer, lager, stout
- Check spice labels
- Avoid 'cross contamination' when cooking and storing
- Join Irish Coeliac Society.

Diabetes

- Use extra dried fruit
- Use a suitable sweetener.
- Avoid Icing on cakes
- Avoid Diabetic products

Healthy Heart

- Avoid Butter/Margarine
- Choose polyunsaturated/monounsaturated/Sunflower oil

High Fibre

- Use wholemeal flour where possible
- Use Brown bread crumbs instead of white

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