

BOUNCE

to a Healthier Holiday Season

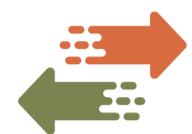


THE GIFT OF HEALTH

The holidays are a special time filled with family, friends, traditions, and joy. But they can also feel overwhelming or stressful with the gatherings, dish preparations, gift purchases, and busy schedules. With a few changes, we can keep the holidays joyful without feeling weighed down.

HOLIDAY FLAVOR WITH BALANCE AND JOY

Food is at the center of many holiday celebrations. From tamales and pozole to collard greens, cornbread, and sweet potato pie, these dishes carry stories, culture, and love. Here are some healthy eating tips:



Switch it up. Add lean meats, beans, or extra vegetables into tamales, pozole, or arroz for more variety. When baking desserts, you can use fruit purées like applesauce or ripe bananas for sweetness.



Add more. Include a colorful side dish with seasonal produce, such as pomegranate salad, roasted squash, or citrus fruits.



Balance your plate. Start with lean proteins, beans, and vegetables. Then, enjoy family favorites like mac and cheese, stuffing, or tamales in smaller portions.



Listen to your body. Start with one tablespoon of each dish, then get seconds for what you truly enjoy. Remember to savor each bite and pause to notice when you feel satisfied.

Sources: [American Heart Association](#), and [The Nutrition Source](#)

SWEET POTATO PIE BARS RECIPE

Serving Size: 1 bar | Calories: 182 kcal | Protein: 4 g | Carbohydrates: 20 g | Fat: 8 g

Crust

- 2 tbsp ground flax
- 5 tbsp water
- 1 cup pecans (or pumpkin seeds)
- 1 cup rolled oats
- ½ tsp salt

Ingredients (for about 12 bars):

Filling

- 4 cups sweet potato, peeled and diced (about 2 medium)
- ½ cup unsweetened non-dairy milk
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 3 tbsp arrowroot powder
- 1 tbsp pumpkin pie spice (or mix of ground cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and ginger)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 350°F and grease or line a 9x9" baking pan.
- Mix the ground flax and water together in a small bowl to create a "flax egg" and set aside for 5 minutes to thicken.
- Add diced sweet potatoes to a pot with water. Cover and steam for 15 minutes, or until tender with fork.
- In the meantime, prepare the base layers for the bars. Add the pecans, oats, and salt to a food processor and process until a fine crumble forms. Add the flax egg to the mixture and pulse until well-combined. A sticky "dough" should be formed.
- Press the dough into the baking dish with a spatula to make sure it is really packed down and even. Rinse out the food processor.
- Add the steamed sweet potato to the food processor with milk, maple syrup, arrowroot powder, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla, and salt.
- Process for at least 60 seconds, or until the mixture is thick and smooth. Spread this mixture over the top of the crust, using a spatula to smooth out the top.
- Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 30 to 35 minutes.
- Once done, let the bars cool for at least 30 minutes before removing them from the pan and slicing. Add pecans or pumpkin seeds to the top for a crunch!



Source: [From My Bowl](#)

FUN FACT

Collard greens are a traditional dish among African American families, symbolizing prosperity. They are also packed with vitamin A, C, and K, which support strong bones, as well as antioxidants, which reduce inflammation in the body.

Source: [HealthySD.gov](#)



TAME HOLIDAY CRAVINGS WITH 3 SIMPLE STEPS

Holiday stress often leads to stress eating. If you feel the urge to snack out of stress rather than true hunger, try these three simple steps:



- 1. Delay:** Pause before acting on a craving. Waiting helps you tell the difference between genuine hunger or eating because you are sad, happy, or bored.



- 2. Distract:** Shift your focus to an enjoyable activity to help cravings pass and support healthier coping.



- 3. Substitute:** If you still want to eat after delaying and distracting, choose a healthier option like fruit, vegetables, or nuts. You will feel better knowing you made a nourishing choice.

Source: [Society of Behavioral Medicine](#)

STRESS LESS, SPEND SMART: HOLIDAY TIPS FOR FINANCIAL WELLNESS

To help you enjoy the holiday season with less worry, here are some simple strategies:



Make one financial decision at a time. Break it down so it feels manageable.



Plan low-cost celebrations. Focus on meaningful traditions that do not require spending much.



Set a realistic holiday budget. Decide what you can spend and stick to it.



Avoid temptation. Skip unnecessary sales or impulse purchases.



Practice deep breathing. Take a pause and breathe deeply when stress rises.

Sources: [Marquette](#), and [American Psychological Association](#)

STAYING ACTIVE THIS SEASON

Even as the weather gets colder, staying active is important for your physical health. Here are a few festive indoor routines that everyone can enjoy:

Quick Holiday-Inspired Moves



Jingle Bell Jogs
Do short bursts of jogging in place.



Reindeer Runs
March in place for 3 minutes.



Holiday Dance Break
Put on your favorite holiday song and dance at your own pace.



Candy Cane Reach
Stretch arms overhead, leaning side to side.



Tree Pose
Balance on one foot, standing tall like a decorated Christmas tree.

Source: [Blender Bottle](#)

FINDING CONNECTION DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Holidays can also bring loneliness and grief, especially for those who have lost loved ones. Here are some ways to cope and support others:



Reach out and stay connected. Faith communities, senior centers, and local volunteer groups offer opportunities to connect. Even brief calls or video chats can ease loneliness.



Acknowledge grief. It is okay to talk about loss. Remembering loved ones through small rituals such as lighting a candle, cooking a favorite dish, or sharing memories with others, can bring comfort.



Explore hobbies and new traditions. Learning a new skill, joining a group, or revisiting old interests can help restore joy and routine.

Sources: [National Council on Aging](#), and [PBS](#)

HOLIDAY HEALTH SAFETY

Even during the holiday season, safety comes first. By taking these simple precautions, you can stay active, independent, and safe all season long.



Watch for outdoor hazards. Wet leaves, uneven sidewalks, and poor lighting can cause slips. Always keep walkways clear and improve lighting.



Wear proper footwear. Choose shoes with sturdy soles and good traction; avoid smooth or worn-out treads.



Make indoor areas safe. Place mats at entryways, clean spills promptly, secure rugs, and keep hallways clear and well-lit.



Use support when needed. Install grab bars, use handrails, and consider balance or fall-prevention classes.



Know your risks. Health conditions, poor vision, and some medications can increase fall risk. Talk to your doctor about ways to stay safe.

Source: [Vaughn Greene](#)

DAY OF THE DEAD

Day of the Dead is a time to celebrate and remember loved ones who have passed. This traditional Mexican holiday reminds us to cherish health, family, and the joy of life every day. We hope you shared a meal, lit a candle, and enjoyed the traditions that keep us connected.



SHARE YOUR HOLIDAY HEALTH & HAPPINESS



We would love to hear from you! Share a favorite healthy recipe or holiday tradition you practice with your family to the email listed below (bounce@Central.UH.EDU). Whether it is a special dish, a meaningful activity, or a way you keep wellness at the center of the season, your ideas could inspire others in our community.

GIVE THE GIFT OF HEALTH WITH BOUNCE

BOUNCE programs are here to help you enjoy the season while also taking steps to feel stronger, more energized, and supported in your health journey.



Let's Get Healthy Together / Juntos Por Una Vida Saludable: Join 26 expert-led sessions *Vida Saludable*: Join 26 expert-led sessions designed to help you prevent Type 2 diabetes. Each session focuses on balanced eating, joyful movement, and building habits that last.



Nutrition Ambassador Program (NAP): Learn how to bring healthier twists to family gatherings with hands-on cooking demonstrations, grocery shopping tips, and nutrition education that reflects our communities. All ingredients and materials are provided, so you can cook, taste, and learn without extra cost.

Our programs are free, offered in English and Spanish, and available online or in person. This season, invite a loved one to join you and BOUNCE together toward better health. If you or your organization are interested in participating in any of these programs, please reach out to us using the contact information below.

For more information, reach us:

832-842-5921 | bounce@central.uh.edu

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