

Make Christmas party good for the heart

Dr. Marla Shapiro will speak on Women's Health, Dec. 7 at Victoria Hospital.

As they go through the aging process, many women find their bodies changing. Out of nowhere it seems like their weight is up, their waists are thicker, and now they have to watch their diet to prevent heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes, or other health problems. While they would like to blame everything on menopause, women really need to step back and look at their lifestyles. Are they eating more, drinking alcohol more, eating out more and exercising less?

The holiday season for most people is exactly that: eat more, drink more, eat out more and exercise less. It's a time of year when people put aside a year-long effort to eat well and throw caution to the wind by indulging in decadent food. I often hear from my patients how difficult it is to attend social functions because the food is so rich and far from the types of foods

they would prefer to eat. Wouldn't it be great to attend social functions where the host's offerings provide healthy alternatives so people can enjoy the event "guilt free"?

But, women, you can make this happen, by taking the challenge and starting a heart healthy (or healthy-weight) entertaining trend within your social group. It can be quite simple. The goal is to prepare low fat, low salt, high fibre foods.

Take some time and look through your recipes. Choose items that are broiled, baked or steamed rather than fried. See if you can alter your favourite recipes to lower the fat or the salt. Read the labels of pre-prepared foods and choose

lower fat and lower salt alternatives. Choose high fibre foods where possible. Here are a few ideas for a cocktail party menu to get you going:

1. The beautiful colours on a platter



Wendy Borody
Women's Health



Start a trend. Serve your guests low fat, low salt, high fibre – but luscious – foods.

of fresh vegetables decorate the table and also offer guests a low fat, low sodium (salt) alternative, rich in many nutrients, fibre and compounds that can protect the heart.

2. Hummus, made from chickpeas, is loaded with protein, soluble fibre, B vitamins, magnesium and calcium and can be a great dip for vegetables or spread on low fat crackers.

3. Salmon can be found in many appetizer recipes and provides a rich source of heart healthy omega 3 fats.

4. Seafood, when steamed or broiled, is always a low-fat alternative. Look for tomato-based sauces rather than cream-type sauces to keep the fat and calories down.

5. Bruschetta made with fresh tomatoes (vitamins and lycopene), garlic and olive oil (heart-healthy monosaturated fat) and served on high fibre bread is a simple appetizer that is sure to be a hit.

6. Cocktails and other alcoholic drinks can add a lot of calories to an evening.

Have some non-alcoholic options for your guests. There are many recipes for alcohol-free cocktails.

It is well worthwhile to take a bit of time in planning entertainment menus. Guests are sure to appreciate the heart-healthy culinary pleasures offered.

For more information on heart health, readers are invited to join the Mature Women's Centre for the Put Your Heart Into It luncheon Dec. 7. Medical expert Dr. Marla Shapiro will speak on the issues of women's heart disease, and how to take action and get on the road to heart health. For more information or to purchase tickets, call 477-3190. For more heart-healthy recipes visit www.maturewomenscentre.ca.

Wendy Borody is a clinical dietitian at the Victoria General Hospital's Mature Women's Centre. To support the Mature Women's Centre and patient care at the Vic, please contact the Victoria General Hospital Foundation at 477-3513 or on-line at www.thevicfoundation.ca.