

Eat smart during holidays

BY VIRGINIA LINN

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Consider biology and psychology when digging into that big Thanksgiving meal.

You'll get the most pleasure from the first few bites of any food. So stop there.

"Be a taster," says Madelyn Fernstrom, director of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Weight Management Center. "It's that mental connection. A small amount is enough to satisfy you."

During the next few weeks, don't try to lose weight. "Try not to gain," Fernstrom said. "Work at maintenance."

Here are some suggestions:

Appetizers

Consider trays of raw veggies with light ranch dressing. Shrimp with cocktail sauce is high in protein and in fat to give you a feeling of fullness going into the meal.

Mix high-calorie nuts with pretzels, raisins and air-popped popcorn. (There are 170 calories in a 1/4 cup of nuts; 100 calories in a 1/4 cup of pretzels.)



SHNS

Before you dig into that big Thanksgiving dinner, remember that you'll get the most pleasure from the first few bites of each food.

Potatoes, stuffing and gravy

For foods that will be smothered with gravy anyway, you won't notice substitutions that cut calories. Sub the cream with evaporated skim milk or even regular or skim milk when whipping the potatoes.

Stuffing, like regular mashed potatoes, is an enormous source of calories. Substitute fat-free chicken broth for the butter.

Desserts

At the grocery store, you can find a variety of substitute sugars such as Equal Sugar Lite and bags of Splenda or Splenda-sugar blends for baking.

Subbing one cup of sugar with a sugar substitute will save 750 calories.

Finally, to burn calories and improve digestion, cap the dinner off with a walk instead of a nap.

Fave foods of the famous

Robin Leach shares luxurious tastes

As host of TV's "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" for 14 years, Robin Leach personified the finer things in life. A true gourmand, he was instrumental in the start up of the hugely successful Food Network and has even authored cookbooks such as "Robin Leach's Healthy Lifestyles Cookbook: Menus and Recipes from the Rich, Famous and Fascinating." Today, he lives in Las Vegas, a city where he claims the culinary scene is second to none.

Q: Everyone wants to know about the most amazing meal you ever had?

A: American chef, Thomas Keller, has won five stars and five diamonds for two of his restaurants: Per Se in New York City and The French Laundry in California's Napa Valley. Without doubt he is a genius. Every item on his lengthy tasting menus is unique with combinations never before dreamed, and each dish is paired with an amazing wine. Just leave the selection to the chef and take his recommendations. For the rest of my life I will never forget the aromas of the new Alba white truffles he presented in an unused cigar box or the unique Japanese box used to fine shave dried smoked Bonita over the bright red eggs of salmon roe.

Q: Best airline food?

A: The very best is on two Asian airlines, Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Air Services, primarily because you have a choice of both Western and Asian cuisines with the tops in attentive service and warm towels between each course. Our domestic airlines don't even bother



to compete these days, and it's sad that what they serve can hardly be called "good food."

That's why whenever I fly through Honolulu I always call my friend Roy Yamaguchi, who owns the famous Roy's restaurant, and he delivers a four-course meal directly to the plane! Perfect for the six-hour flight back to L.A. ... even though it makes all the other passengers really jealous!

Q: A restaurant where you'd never mind waiting for a table?

A: My favorite is SPAGO, be it in Beverly Hills or Las Vegas. Wolfgang Puck, the No. 1 celebrity star chef always has a "Rich & Famous" pizza waiting for me.

It consists of smoked salmon and caviar! Yummy beyond belief. Even though it's fairly secret and never on the menu, you can still order it. Wolfgang's cuisine is comfortable yet elegant, simple but tremendously tasty. Even if you had to wait at the bar it's a fun warm ambience. It's all about simply enjoying oneself with good food without complication.

Robin Leach's rich and expensive chicken

3 lbs. fryer chicken, cut up
1 large onion, sliced
3 cups Champagne, divided
1/2 tsp. dried basil, divided
1/2 tsp. dried thyme, divided
1/2 tsp. dried sage, divided
1/4 tsp. freshly ground pepper, divided
2 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/4 cup butter
2 cups canned (and drained) or frozen baby peas
2 cups canned (and drained) or frozen baby carrots
1 (10 3/4 oz.) can cream of mushroom soup
1 lb. small red potatoes, peeled

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Wash and dry chicken. Place sliced onions in a small roasting pan.

2. Add 1/3 cup Champagne. Place chicken on top of onion-Champagne mixture. Scatter half of the basil, thyme, sage and pepper over chicken. Sprinkle with Worcestershire sauce. Cut butter into small pieces and sprinkle half of it over the chicken.

3. Add another 1/3 cup Champagne. Add peas, carrots and the rest of the herbs. Top with another 1/3 cup Champagne. Top with remaining butter pieces.

4. Spread undiluted mushroom soup over all. Partially sink potatoes into the soup and pour in remaining 2 cups Champagne. Cover pan. Bake for 1 1/4 hours.

5. Uncover and bake until chicken and potatoes have browned, another 20 to 25 minutes. Serves 4.

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CINDY AND SCOTT GREENBERG

VineGal and VineGuy



Let's talk turkey

Thanksgiving is a festive occasion, replete with friends and family. It is also an opportunity to celebrate and gorge without guilt. But because there are so many different foods with complex flavors competing for space on your plate and your palate, pairing wines with a typical Thanksgiving meal is difficult. Most people just don't want to take the time to deal with it. We'd like to change all that by starting another American Revolution: drinking good wine with your Thanksgiving dinner.

So in the spirit of marital cooperation and the celebration of family, we are offering our column this week as a joint effort. We have each picked out our favorite wines to enjoy with this year's Thanksgiving dinner. Retail prices are approximate.

He said

It appears that relations between France and the United States have been somewhat strained lately. In the interest of détente, and in recognition of the significant role the French played in our original fight for independence, I propose a culinary unification.

My recommendations for this year's Thanksgiving dinner marry the best of traditional American cooking with French wines. Here are my picks.

Thanksgiving is a festive occasion, so start off the evening with a wine that says, "Celebrate." **Heidsieck & Co. Monopole, Green Top, Non-Vintage Demi-Sec Champagne, Epernay, France** (\$35) has just the right combination of sweet and dry to jumpstart your dinner. The combination of roasted hazelnuts and tight bubbles turns any meal into an occasion.

If you are preparing a traditional dinner, the **2000 Domaine Weinbach Schlossberg, Alsace, France** (\$38) is a marvelous choice. Its honeysuckle nose and rich, powerful flavors of honeyed white fruits and minerals complement turkey and hold their own with the cranberries. With a more avant garde preparation, try the **2003 Louis Latour, La Chanfleure Chablis, Burgundy, France** (\$17). This well-balanced chardonnay offers crisp acidity and intense apple fruit flavor with underlying notes of flint and mineral. Made without oak, it is a pure expression of chardonnay

and would pair well with oyster stuffing. Lastly, for the red wine lovers in the crowd, try the **2003 Alliance Loire, Clos de la Ly-sardiere Chinon, Loire, France** (\$12). It's a delightful alternative to pinot noir. With notes of violets on the nose and bright red cherries on the palate, it can play well with either turkey or game fowl. For dessert, bring the Heidsieck back for an encore performance.

She said

I am an American girl with a penchant for domestic wines, and while I enjoy French wines as much as the next VineGuy, I like to keep my traditional Thanksgiving celebration, well, traditional. And given the superb quality of domestic wines, American never tasted so good.

Here are my picks to keep your guests happy and your table red, white and sparkling.

I do agree with the VineGuy that Thanksgiving is a festive occasion; so to kick things off, try the **Mountain Dome Brut Non-Vintage Champagne from Washington** (\$20). The chardonnay/pinot noir blend gives this champagne more character and depth than wines costing twice as much. With a traditional dinner, the **2003 Melville Estate Chardonnay, Santa Rita Hills, Calif.** (\$20) is a pleasing balance of ripe pears and white stone fruits with crisp acidity. With the addition of subtle mineral notes on the backend, it is a great match for turkey. For those seeking a non-traditional dinner, try the **2003 Tablas Creek Roussanne, Central Coast, Calif.** (\$27). A French varietal with California flair, it has a big honeysuckle nose. The crisp acidity keeps the copious amounts of tropical fruit in check and would pair well with pheasant. For a red choice, the **2001 Wilson Vineyards Petite Syrah, Clarksburg, Calif.** (\$25) provides a core of ripe black cherries and cocoa with good structure and focus. Its tannins are smooth and well integrated and can stand up to bolder fowl such as goose or duck.

Wine tip: Don't serve your white wine too cold, since it can mute the flavors. Take the bottle out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving in order to let it warm up just a bit and let the flavors shine through.

If you have wine suggestions for holiday meals, please e-mail us at scott@vineguy.com.