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HOLIDAY INDULGENCE

Our 'Downtown Dietitian' looks at our favorite things

BY KIM GALEAZ

What's your favorite holiday dish or food item? Favorite holiday sweet or dessert? While you're thinking about all those goodies, are you also bemoaning the fact it's once again the Season of Overeating?

For most of us, it truly is a time of nonstop celebrations revolving around food and family and keeping your weight under control seems harder than ever. You just can't pass up an extra serving of Grandma's stuffing or say no to another glass of eggnog or champagne. Gravy is a side dish, not a condiment, in your family. And apple, pecan or pumpkin pie *without* whipped cream or ice cream?! Are you crazy?!

So here's my holiday wish for you: May you enjoy every single bite of every holiday goodie you taste. But may you also remember to practice a little moderation with holiday favorites and balance it out with a dose of increased exercise or activity, so that you start 2007 happy, healthy and not one pound heavier.

Don't forget to celebrate the positive nutritional attributes of your favorite holiday dishes. As a dietitian, I'm all about finding the "good" in every food, dish or dessert instead of just focusing on "too many calories" or "too much fat." You'd be surprised just how many health benefits are in some of your holiday-time favorites.

Join me on a culinary quest for favorite holiday foods within our downtown neighborhoods. Along the way, I'll share tips for balance and moderation with holiday cooking and eating.

Happy, healthy holidays!

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for you: May you enjoy every single bite of every holiday goodie you taste. But may you also remember to practice a little moderation with holiday favorites and balance it out with a dose of increased exercise or activity, so that you start 2007 happy, healthy and not one pound heavier.

BARB TEGARDEN, Chatham Arch resident and co-owner of Nestle Inn Bed & Breakfast:

Favorite holiday food – Turkey with her grandmother's stuffing. Barb is still trying to duplicate this stuffing, which she says contained sage and eggs that made it so dense and thick you could slice it.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Pumpkin Pie with *homemade* pie crust and whipped cream. She also likes those cream cheese pastries filled with raspberry, apricot and prune filling.

Holiday challenge – Portion control. That's because Barb's family is Russian and celebrates with *two* Christmas dinners, because the Orthodox Church goes by a different calendar. The second holiday has a special Christmas Eve supper which includes a traditional soup made with dried mushrooms, sauerkraut juice and potatoes.

Dietitian comments – Turkey stuffing made with breads, vegetables and even a few eggs is a fairly moderate dish, nutrition-wise. It's when sausage, nuts and other higher fat ingredients get added that calories climb. Try boosting the nutrients with extra vegetables like celery, onions and mushrooms. Fruits like chopped apple, pear, dried cranberries and cherries work beautifully as well. Whole wheat or whole



Barb Tegarden with two of her favorites -- Turkey with her grandmother's stuffing, and pumpkin pie with homemade pie crust.

grain bread would surely boost the fiber, but most of us prefer our traditional white bread cubes or packaged stuffing mix. If the package calls for butter or margarine, leave it out entirely and just increase the chicken broth. You'll still end up with tasty, moist stuffing.

Homemade crust is one of those foods I refuse to make "healthier." Crust is crust and you should enjoy it for what it is: melt-in-your-mouth flaky and filled with satisfying fat calories from the butter, shortening or lard. Simply enjoy homemade pie crust by either eating a smaller slice of pie. Or by eating as much pie as you want and then exercising 30 extra minutes! Your choice. Remember to celebrate the fact that a slice of pumpkin pie contains over 80% of your daily Vitamin A and is packed with good-for-you nutrients.

Kim's Easy Savory Stuffing

One package (16 oz.) herb seasoned stuffing mix
3 to 3 ½ cups chicken broth (regular, low sodium or organic)

- 1 ½ cups diced celery
- 1 ½ cups chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Coat a 9x13 baking pan with butter or vegetable cooking spray. Cook celery, onion and garlic in microwave until crisp-tender. Add vegetables to stuffing mix along with broth. Lightly mix until all ingredients are moistened. (Add extra chicken broth if you prefer a moister stuffing.) Place stuffing mixture in pan. Bake until heated thoroughly, about 30 – 40 minutes. Makes 8 to 10 one-cup servings.

BECKY HOSTETTER, Cottage Home resident, legendary vegetarian restaurateur and private chef:

Favorite holiday food – Brussels Sprouts with Pearl Onions and Horseradish Cream (a similar recipe can be found at www.epicurious.com). Cheese and Nut Loaf, too, because she's vegetarian. Becky makes this loaf with brown rice; cottage, gruyere and cheddar cheeses; dried porcini; and morel mushrooms and seasonings.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Not one but four: White Chocolate Apricot Cake, Buche de Noel, Trifle, and Snow on a Mountain Cake. Becky says you don't sit around and eat this Snow Cake; you stand around and dig in! The cake part is made from flour, dates, walnuts, eggs and sugar. It's torn into pieces and arranged with lots of oranges and bananas and completely covered in whipped cream. It's a fun cake and sometimes Becky adds little skiers and trees on the "mountain!"

Favorite beverage – Wassail.

Holiday challenge – Becky admits she struggles with weight gain all year long, not just at the holidays. So she tries to walk more and loves walking in the cold weather.

Dietitian comments – Even though Becky's Brussels Sprouts include a lot of fat from the whipping cream, let's focus on the fact that Brussels Sprouts happen to be an incredibly nutrient-dense vegetable and we all should try eating them more often. Brussels sprouts are a cruciferous vegetable, just like broccoli and cabbage, and they're filled with cancer-fighting nutrients. Plus they're packed with fiber and Vitamin K. Consider making Brussels Sprouts with just a little butter and caraway seeds, like Becky does all year long; the cream recipe is just for the holidays.

As for the Snow on a Mountain Cake, celebrate the fact that this cake is packed with nutrient-dense fruits! Oranges, bananas and dates – all filled with fiber, vitamins and minerals. Dates are another food this dietitian wishes everyone would enjoy more often. They're naturally sweet and incredibly high-fiber.

Wassail is a drink made of ale or wine sweetened with sugar and flavored with spices like cinnamon, allspice and cloves. The origin of wassail is Scandinavian and an old toast "to be in good health." You'll definitely be in good health if you practice moderation with *any* alcoholic beverage.

NICH NICHOLAS, Lockerbie resident and hairstylist at Mary's & Friends, a downtown salon:

Favorite holiday food – Dressing. Nich calls it dressing, not stuffing, and he likes it without gravy and plenty of onions and celery.

More favorites

Two contributions that were not included in the version of this feature published in Urban Times:

BILL BROOKS, Lockerbie resident, editor of Urban Times and self-described publishing maggot:

Favorite holiday food – Candied sweet potatoes with or without the burnt marshmallows. And although he hasn't had it in 10 years, his "real" favorite holiday dish is oyster dressing. Not just any old oyster dressing either; only the juicy and moist kind made by his ex-mother-in-law. She used to smuggle him some every holiday season long after the divorce from her daughter.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Bill isn't big on sweets or desserts like cake, cookies or candy. But he does consider himself a pie fan and might enjoy pumpkin pie during the holidays. But he'd much rather go back and eat another half pound of turkey so there aren't any leftovers.

Favorite holiday beverage – A good eggnog, just a tad alcoholic.

Holiday challenge – Not going back for thirds. Or fourths.

Dietitian comments – Bill admits that he loves turkey skin – both his and the skin Jeannie quickly discards (if she's not looking). Turkey skin is nothing but fat, fat and more fat. But I trust Bill's new-found knowledge about moderation and exercise will come into play this holiday season. He'll hopefully eat a little less turkey fat and a more Vitamin-A and fiber-rich sweet potatoes.

Since work is a little lighter during December (there isn't a January issue of Urban Times), Bill tries to get more exercise by tunnel-walking. Let's be very clear on this point: It is *not* mall walking. Downtown Indianapolis has underground tunnels, or walkways, connecting the

Circle Centre, Embassy Suites Hotel, the State Capitol and the Government Centers. Bill feels it's a great workout because it's "hilly." (Travis underestimates; Bill overestimates.) Slight inclines would be more accurate.

JEFF GREENWALT, Old Northside resident and the author's favorite holiday cooking partner:

Favorite holiday food – Turkey with mashed potatoes and gravy. Jeff's favorite food is actually three separate items, but he considers it one because everything has to be mixed all together: cut-up turkey mixed with mashed potatoes and gravy. I'm embarrassed to admit I'm going on my fourth holiday season with Jeff and never realized this mushy concoction (adult culinary faux-pas?) is his favorite holiday food.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Apple pie with a glass of milk.

Favorite holiday beverage – Red wine. But that's his favorite beverage all year long. And Jeff feels extra glasses of wine are justified because of the health benefits.

Holiday challenge – Jeff tries (even if it's just in his mind) to increase his activity level to offset the increased calories from overeating holiday foods. He says he really tries to go into the holiday season a little lighter weight-wise. He does that by practicing the 80/20 method of eating – choosing more healthful foods 80 percent of the time so he can overindulge 20 percent.

Dietitian comments – Wait a minute! Doesn't it sound a little bit like Jeff is trying to please the dietitian? Health benefits in wine? 80/20 eating philosophy? A glass of milk with pie? But I can vouch for him; he really does "try" to eat healthy and practice moderation. Yes, he really does have milk with his pie. And cake. And cookies. And coffee cake. You get the picture. And if it weren't for me insisting on longer power walks during the holidays, he wouldn't increase his physical activity one bit. ■

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Chocolate Cream Pie. Nich's Grandma always made this decadent chocolate cream pie with homemade pastry crust, lots of Hershey Kisses in the melted pudding "stuff" and topped it with meringue. Nich says it's quite good and chocolaty!

Favorite holiday beverage – Eggnog. Nich has a Martha Stewart recipe for homemade, no-cook eggnog that he swears by. It's rich, creamy and filled with raw eggs, sugar, bourbon and rum. But he doesn't add all that liquor – not because he's concerned about better nutrition – but because "you'd collapse on the floor."

Holiday challenge – Trying not to eat everything in sight! Nich says the holidays are especially difficult because everyone brings in food – candy, cookies, even homemade toffee. Being the kind-hearted hairstylist he is, Nich doesn't want to insult anyone so he tries to eat just a

small bite.

Dietitian comments – Nich's Grandma can put a whole bag of Hershey Kisses in that chocolate cream pie; I'm much more concerned about the health risk of consuming raw eggs from Miss Martha's eggnog recipe. I always thought raw eggs were off limits and eggnog should be cooked if you're making it from scratch. But I realize I've overreacted, because although the American Egg Board (www.aeb.org) doesn't recommend eating raw eggs, it does state that the risk of food-borne illness from eggs is very low. So decide if you want to take that very slight risk. (I have to admit I willingly take that risk with cookie dough and brownie and cake batter.)

A safer – and healthier – option, however, would be Lower Fat Eggnog purchased at your favorite supermarket. Nearly every major milk company makes Lower Fat

Eggnog that will save you a considerable amount of fat and calories and still taste delicious and creamy. Maybe these statistics will convince you. Picture a 12-ounce soda can. Now imagine dividing that can into thirds. That's four ounces or one-half cup, which is a "serving" of eggnog. Brace yourself because one serving of regular eggnog contains 180 calories and 9 grams fat while the lower-fat versions contain around 120 calories and only 3 grams fat. At least you can celebrate the fact you're enjoying a calcium-filled beverage! Every one-half cup contains 15% of your daily calcium.

KRISTI SPEARS, Chatham Arch resident and pumpkin martini aficionado:

Favorite holiday food – Hot Rice. Kristi's grandmother, who is of Mexican-American descent, makes a dish the family calls "hot rice," which includes white rice, green chilies, cheddar cheese and sour cream and is baked in a Bundt pan. Every year, Kristi and her sister make a special request for this side dish that's served along with the traditional turkey.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Harvest Pie. Kristi's favorite holiday dessert is a lot like pumpkin pie, but made with butternut squash instead of pumpkin and healthier ingredient substitutions like egg substitute, fat free evaporated milk, less sugar and lots of spices.

Favorite holiday beverage – Pumpkin martinis. Kristi says these are made with canned pumpkin puree, cream, spices and spirits. But since she's expecting, Kristi says she'll enjoy the non-alcoholic version this year

Holiday challenge – Kristi's family has the largest spread of food that she's ever seen. After they eat their main meal, they take a rest, chat, and then find themselves grazing around this mound of food all night. Before they know it, they've eaten two or three holiday meals within an eight-hour span.

Dietitian comments – Kristi really does have a challenge this year, because although she's pregnant and a little weight gain is expected, too much weight is problematic. She plans on really controlling herself this year by "stepping away from the food." You can do the same by reading a magazine or book, watching a movie or taking several short walks outside. (Editor's note: Or shooting yourself.)

Pumpkin Martinis and Butternut Squash Pie (ditto for pumpkin pie) are all great examples of blending nutrient-dense (pumpkin and squash) with the not-so-nutrient-dense (alcohol and pie crust). Pumpkin and squash are packed with antioxidants and Vitamin A, as well as fiber.

NANCY INUI, Old Northside resident and ONS Association treasurer:

Favorite holiday food – Jiao Tze. These are actually Chinese Pot stickers. They're an old family favorite at Christmas and New Year's because Nancy's family lived in China when she was little. These potstickers evoke decades

At the office

Eight practical and radical tips for dealing with holiday eating at the office:

1. Decide to enjoy the holiday goodies only once a day. Review your choices and take only those you really want to savor and enjoy.
2. Stop feeling bad or guilty about eating. If you've decided to partake in the holiday festivities, enjoy it. Savor and relish it.
3. Unless it's a full-meal spread, treat the holiday goodies as just that: treats. That means enjoying decadent goodies in addition to your regular breakfast, lunch and dinner, not instead of.
4. Eat smaller portions. Just take a couple bites.
5. Pace, don't race. Slow down your hand-to-mouth motion. You'd be surprised how filling some foods are with just a small amount and how much better foods taste when you don't stuff them in your mouth and gulp them down.
6. Just say no. Very radical, but you don't have to eat "just because it's there." You're the one in control – not the food or your coworkers.
7. Start a new office tradition by suggesting a ban on office treats from Nov. 24 through Jan. 3 since you'll all get plenty at home and family gatherings.
8. Once everyone gasps at suggestion number seven, start a new office tradition by suggesting a designated "treat day" once a week during holidays. ■

of family gatherings preparing and enjoying them as a group. The first food processors Nancy, her mother and siblings received years ago were acquired to save the time and effort when chopping pork and cabbage for these potstickers.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Shortbread cookies. Nancy says she enjoys many different varieties of these tasty treats that have been a family tradition for years.

Favorite holiday beverage – Champagne.

Dietitian comments – Nancy's potstickers are fairly healthy because they're made with wonton wraps that are virtually fat-free themselves. Pork is a very lean protein source and cabbage adds vitamins, minerals and fiber.

On the other end of the spectrum are those shortbread cookies. Plain shortbread cookies are made with just a few ingredients: flour, sugar, butter and more butter. Maybe some vanilla. It's another holiday favorite I wouldn't recommend tinkering with to make healthier. Just enjoy them for their rich, buttery flavor and texture. And practice moderation.

JEFF COWSERT, Chatham Arch resident and neighborhood holiday-lover:*

Favorite holiday food – Ham with Crushed and Sliced

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Pineapple.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Chocolate Covered Cherries. Jeff readily admits to a weakness for these candies, also known as cordial cherries. He even loves the really cheap boxes from the supermarket. Since he can easily “get out of control” with these chocolates, he limits his indulgence to holiday time only. Out of control means the whole box (10) instead of a serving (2).

Favorite holiday beverage – Anything alcoholic, like eggnog with bourbon.

Holiday challenge – Jeff feels it’s impossible to get extra exercise during the holidays and just waits until after Jan. 1. He thinks he gains around four or five pounds every holiday season.

Dietitian comments – Jeff’s ham is an extremely lean protein choice; every 3-ounce portion contains only 140 calories and 4 grams of fat. That’s much less than turkey with skin and just a little bit more than turkey without the skin. Slather on extra sliced and crushed pineapple and there’s a fruit serving for the day.

Chocolate-covered cherries aren’t as high fat as you’d think. In fact, a “serving” – 2 cherries – is only 3.5 grams of fat. But they contain 150 calories, nearly all of it from sugary carbohydrates. A full box is five servings (10 cherries) and contains a whopping 750 calories and 17.5 grams of fat. But remember to celebrate the positive virtues: cordial cherries are now available in *dark* chocolate, which has more heart-healthy properties than milk chocolate.

*Jeff’s transforms his home into a “spooky house” every Halloween.

CAROLE VEATCH, Herron-Morton Place neighborhood publicity chair:

Favorite holiday food – Stuffing. Carole always makes extra so there plenty of leftovers. Tearing the bread for the stuffing was always her job as a little girl and she plans on passing that tradition down to her daughter, Becca, when she’s old enough.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Green Stuff. Carole knows that is not a very elegant name for a dish, but it’s what her family has always called it. And Green Stuff is serious business in her family; there have been family fights over the leftovers. It’s just a given that every holiday dinner will include Green Stuff. Chances are we’ve all had some



Jeff Cowser of Chatham Arch mulls what is fundamentally everybody’s holiday dilemma -- two treats, or a plateful?

rendition of Green Stuff – it’s made with lime Jello, cream cheese, crushed pineapple and Cool Whip.

Favorite holiday beverage – Egg Nog. The real thing, not the light version. Carole says she skips the gravy as a trade-off just so she can have the real egg nog!

Holiday challenge – Walking past the never-ending array of treats that are always out at the office during the month of December. Carole says the filing cabinets outside her office tend to be “food central,” so every time she walks in or out of her office, she has to pass by the food display.

Dietitian comments – Any gelatin salad, like Carole’s green stuff, can be made healthier by using light or fat free cream cheese and whipped topping. Pineapple, or any fruit, in gelatin salads, is a great way to get fruit serving during the holidays.

(The food-office dilemma requires a lot of self control and discipline. Suggestions on dealing with office holiday foods can be found with the website version of this report.)

TRAVIS DiNICOLA, former Woodruff Place resident and the new executive director of Indy Reads:

Favorite holiday food – Smoked salmon. And it has to be enjoyed every Christmas morning exactly like this: smoked salmon on a plain, white bagel with full fat cream cheese and red onion. No capers, though.

Favorite holiday sweet or dessert – Pecan pie with a huge dollop of vanilla ice cream. (A “dollop” of ice cream?)

Favorite holiday beverage – Beaujolais Nouveau, since he has leftovers from what he purchased the day it was released, Nov. 16.

Dietitian comments – Smoked salmon is incredibly nutrient-dense. It’s filled with protein and the fat contains those heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Travis’s bagel sandwich could be made healthier by substituting a whole grain bagel and light, reduced-fat cream cheese, but he emphatically says he wouldn’t even consider that during the holidays.

Regarding that pecan pie: When Travis was asked to describe a “dollop” of ice cream, he acquiesced. It’s a huge scoop. Just remember that every one-half cup scoop of ice cream contains 120 calories and 8 grams fat and is not a significant calcium source. ■

Kim Galeaz, a Chatham Arch resident, is a registered and certified dietitian. She is a freelance food and nutrition writer and consultant to the food and beverage industry. Her favorite holiday food(s) are savory stuffing, turkey skin, dark turkey meat and the giblets, especially the gizzard.