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**Holiday Eating Strategy Sheet**

**By Caryl Ehrlich**

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"I'm glad it is over," say many people after Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's.

If you are the food preparer, you are most likely shopping, mincing, dicing, and sautéing, days - possibly weeks before the event. The good china, crystal, flatware, and serving pieces are brought out of storage. They are washed, polished, and used once more before they are stored away for the next special event.

If you are the attendee, you may be feeling guilty that the food preparer did all the work, so you may be thinking of eating a second portion of everything to show appreciation to the preparer.

An enormous amount of food is put on the table(s). People come. They eat. They leave over an enormous amount of food. This brings us to Holiday Leftovers.

Holiday leftovers are not to be confused with the tunafish left on a platter after your family has had their share at lunch yesterday. I'm talking about vast quantities of many dishes. Leftovers are not left over if they are eaten.

For many, part of the ritual of Thanksgiving is the 11 p.m. raid on the refrigerator to join everyone else who is standing and eating in pajamas and bathrobes. Is a turkey leg one item? Two? Three? Might be more. You'd recognize the satiation component if you were eating slower and sipping water between bites. Plates and utensils are your friends. They keep you mindful.

You want to fit into your dress/pants at the end of the meal, at the end of the day, at the end of the weekend, as well as at the beginning when everyone arrives (or if you are the arrivee) and tells you how wonderful you look. Someone said, "A goal without a plan is just a daydream." And I know Yogi Berra said: "If you don't know where you're going, you could end up someplace else."

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There are a few things you can do during a holiday meal day that can be practiced year round. If you set a goal to make this your new way, it becomes comfortable year round, then when a holiday meal comes along, you won't be looking to make it an overeating exception. You'll keep feeding the smaller person no matter who you are with, what country you are in, and what the holiday it is.

You are either striving to become a smaller person in which case you feed that smaller person you want to be. Or, you are a smaller person, in which case, you feed the smaller person you are.

Here's the plan:

Almost every month has a holiday where food is the centerpiece. The holiday eating strategies are helpful if you read the information before, during, and after the festivities. This will help you plan ahead, execute, evaluate, and adjust, for next time. That's the thing with holidays - there's always a next time. Fill in the following sentence. Go for it.

I want to weigh \_\_\_\_\_ pounds, 365 days a year, not just when it's convenient. I can do it!

1. Don't skip meals. Starving all day as an excuse to overeat at a party doesn't work. Plan ahead, instead.

2. In a relaxed, quiet atmosphere, envision what food and drink you'll be encountering and plan, in advance, in writing, what you want to do. Just scribble a few decisions in a 3 X 5 (or smaller) card: Is it going to be a one-item, two-item, three-item meal? How many items are appropriate? What are they to be? Chicken? Fish? Veal? Will you choose a potato? Do you want dessert more than bread? A salad more than a vegetable? To weigh \_\_\_\_\_ pounds or to continue weighing what you weigh. And 2b) What behavioral techniques do you plan to use to help lessen food-related anxiety? Will you carry around a goblet of water during the stand up portion of the festivities? Will you help the hostess set the table? Will you play with the children? Food is just a part of the day. What are you going to be doing when social anxiety and old family issues rear their heads in the guise of best sweet potato pie. If you always do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got.

3. Wear a belt with a buckle, whenever eating and whenever necessary. Buckle on snug. Wear a thin belt under your clothes if the outfit is of the cover-up variety.

When an elastic-waisted pants/skirt give, it gives oh so quietly. You're not even aware that you're growing back into that bigger person's pants/skirt. A waistband tells you at dinner that you haven't even digested what you had at lunch. When you reach for a second helping of something, your waistband will tell you: "don't do that." And you'll pick up the water instead.

4. While in attendance, keep moving. Help the hostess, play with children, and talk to everyone in the room before looking at the food. Don't linger near the buffet table. A wonderful three-part question to ask before eating anytime, anywhere, is: Am I hungry? Am I hungry enough to put food on a plate and eat with utensils (knife, fork, spoon, chopsticks)? Am I hungry enough to make my meal - whether one or two or three or more items - last a relaxing, pleasant, 20-minutes, or more?

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5. Fill a glass with water. Carry it around and drink it. Throughout the party and whenever necessary, relax, deep breathe, and stretch to reduce socially anxious moments. If the dinner is to be very late, you might consider having a cup of soup or cereal at home in a quiet atmosphere before leaving for the festivities. Then when the flying Rumaki appetizers make an entrance and you're waiting for the entree, you'll be able to honestly say, no thanks, I'm not hungry.

6. If it is a buffet meal, walk the distance without a plate as you identify the protein and the vegetables and whether dessert is more tempting than the bread or the drink. Then go back to the beginning of the table and make yourself a plate as you might be served in a restaurant.

Plan the number of items in advance. Decide, before arriving, whether you'll choose a bread or beverage or dessert or alcohol, rather than deciding you'll have all four. (Is the bread really unique, the coffee unusual, the extra drink adding to your enjoyment?)

7. Find a place to eat where you can enjoy your meal in a relaxed manner while using utensils. If this is not possible, or the choices are really not to your liking, do the best that you can do under the circumstances.

It is okay to tell your hosts you don't want a second helping of everything. They only want you to have

a good time. You won't be having a good time if you eat too much and your clothes become tight. Overeating is not a reward. Fill up on the ambiance. Food is just part of the day's events. Food is not entertainment.

8. Eat slowly and thoughtfully. Make each meal last a relaxing twenty minutes, or more. Put utensils down between bites, take frequent sips of water, and intersperse plenty of good conversation between bites. Finish chewing and swallowing each bite before inserting more food.

9. Alcohol causes lack of resolve, which may cause you to eat or drink too much of things you didn't plan for. Less and less alcohol is needed as your total body weight diminishes. If alcohol is your choice instead of bread, beverage, or dessert, toast the holiday but try to drink two or more sips of water for each sip of alcohol. Always make sure the alcohol is part of the meal where you will be coating the inner lining of your stomach. Before drinking an alcoholic beverage, bear in mind, nobody said you have to finish your drink either.

10. There will always be another meal, another holiday, another party. Keep in mind how much more fun they will be with a slimmer waistline, a more in control you.

11. Do the best you can. There are a lot of choices to make. The first time, your plan may not turn out exactly as you pictured it to be. By reading your strategies and planning in advance, in writing, what you want to accomplish, chances are you'll eat a little less, move a little more, put your fork down sooner, and feel a little better than had you not had a plan. But, no matter what happens, Get Back on The Program at the very next meal.

12. Most of all have a nice time. Feeling stuffed, bloated, or uncomfortable in your clothes does not

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enhance the enjoyment of the event. More is not better; it is only more.

13. Rewrite this Holiday Eating Strategy Review onto a compact piece of paper. Carry your Holiday Eating Strategy Review sheet with you to read before, and during the party. Repeat your weight loss goals to yourself several times during the day of the food encounter. I want to weigh \_\_\_\_\_ pounds. Any meal is not the Last Supper. It's just another meal. When sufficiently armed, the battle is won.

14. If all else fails, flee the city with a friend.

This article is an excerpt from the book *Conquer Your Food Addiction* published by Simon and Schuster. Caryl Ehrlich, the author, also teaches The Caryl Ehrlich Program, a one-on-one behavioral approach to weight loss in New York City. Visit her at

to know more

about weight loss and keep it off without diet, deprivation, props, or pills.

## **You Can Learn To Read Guitar Sheet Music**

**By Tomas Labas**

When you learn to read guitar sheet music it will be vital in expanding your guitar playing skills. Playing by ear will only get you so far and I am here to help take it to the next step. I will show you some basic tips and tricks to help you learn to read guitar sheet music and hopefully that will make you a better and more versatile guitar player.

I will now give you a list that will show you it is not hard to learn to read guitar sheet music.

Finding the right material

Most guitar books will have some basic sheet music and songs in the front pages that are designed to help you learn to read guitar sheet music quickly. Once you have basic guitar knowledge it is relatively easy to learn to read guitar sheet music. Start in small sections, one chord at a time. Use your guitar and play the chord out loud until you know it sounds correct.

Setting your self up

You will need to be in a small quiet room where you will not be distracted by anything when you learn to read guitar sheet music. The only way to know when you get it right is if it sounds right and it can be difficult do that if you have screaming kids in the room with you or loud street noise outside. Concentration is key and this will make it easier to learn how to read guitar sheet music. If you are distracted you may find a whole day can be wasted trying to focus.

Getting started

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Remember what I said, be free from distraction! I cannot stress that enough. Now you're alone and it's quiet, find a music book with sheet music, try to pick something easy but also try to pick something you are familiar with. It makes it much easier to learn to read guitar sheet music if you are familiar with the tune. Make sure you are confident with one piece before you move on to the next.

Continue practicing

Continue to practice as much as you can, you will find that the better you get the more you will practice. When you enjoy something you will generally apply more time to it. Trying to learn to read guitar sheet music is easy as long as you practice! Once you have mastered reading sheet music then you can attempt to write your own music and that is where the real fun begins! It is essential to make sure you are confident or you will only have to go back and learn to read guitar sheet music all over again.

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