

When Food Is Love: Handling Celebrations

By Mary Jo Kurtz

This month people are still in a healthy mind set and hoping to keep their New Year's resolutions a while longer. However, with Valentine's Day approaching and the winter blahs lurking it is certainly a time when people are feeling conflicted with food issues; And why not? For many of us "Food is Love!"

Food has always been at the heart of the way we nurture ourselves and others. We use food to express our love to others in social situations, celebrations, and even our own family meals. Food is also one form of love that we give ourselves. It is nourishment when we feed our bodies, but unfortunately food can be used to fill a void when our emotions are wreaking havoc. This negative behavior is a leading cause of the obesity epidemic we are facing today.

A common challenge faced by my clients who are looking to make healthy life-style changes involves celebrations that center around food and unhealthy food choices. While food will always be important in our expression of love during these occasions there are a few easy tips that can enhance the experience. It is most important when planning any celebration to appeal to all of the senses. This will ensure a pleasant, loving experience for your family, friends and guests. Some simple suggestions to accomplish this include:

- If your celebration doesn't already have a theme such as a birthday, or anniversary, then create one. Use your theme in all your plans and be creative. This will decrease the focus on the food alone and, in the end, create a wonderful experience your guests will remember long after the menu fades from their memories.
- Use your atmosphere to tantalize your guests. Remember to use music, wonderful aromas, festive lighting, flowers, and other points of interest. These things combined with your food choices will nurture your guest souls too.
- Always keep your menu aligned with your theme, but most importantly, make your menu items the healthiest choices of nutrient dense foods. These food choices include plenty of fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains and proteins. These foods are much more satisfying to our bodies and make us less likely to overindulge in rich desserts. If you do choose to partake in dessert, the protein will protect you from a crash after the sugar wears off. When our blood sugar is low, we are much more likely to eat even more sugar.
- Incorporate as many colors as possible into your food choices. While color is visually pleasing, different colored foods actually provide the body with a variety of nutrients, especially antioxidants.
- Have a game or activity with your theme that will encourage guests to make authentic connections. Engaging in meaningful conversations with friends and family, enjoying physical touch with real hugs, and laughing from your belly will create a truly fun celebration.

When preparing meals for yourself and your immediate family these tips are also important.

- Create some rituals for family meals. Use special plates or glassware; add candles or soft background music.
- Engage in deep conversation. Ask meaningful questions and wait for the reply. Make sure everyone's turn is respected. Create a truly loving family experience.
- As with planning a large celebration, creating a plan for your meals is vital. Have a weekly food plan. Set aside a few minutes before shopping and write down your weekly meals. Put it on your calendar. Get your ingredients. Stick to your plan. Your stress level will decrease and that alone will make everyone's dining experience more pleasant!

We hope you find some of these tips useful and for more information about this topic and additional suggestions you may subscribe to our complimentary monthly newsletter by visiting our website @ www.wellnecessity.com.