

Say 'I do' to dieting during wedding season

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With the warm weather comes all things wedding — a season overflowing with decadent cuisine lavished upon those running the gauntlet of engagement parties, bridal showers, bachelorette parties, rehearsal dinners and wedding receptions.

Unfortunately, many well-intended dieters leave their "good" eating habits behind amid the festivities. This wedding season, waistline-wary guests should arm themselves with "party dieting" strategies that can help them stick to their health regime amongst the revelry.

Consider these tips offered up by Registered Dietitian Jennifer Baumann, Director of Nutrition for TrimTalk.com, a provider of live-remote, expert-based weight-loss coaching and emotional support services:

Plan ahead for success

Before the party, write a journal entry about how much you're going to eat, and what healthy choices you'll make. Challenge yourself to stick closely to it and detail how you will reward yourself for doing so.

Modify your pre-meals

Knowing your meals later in the day may be larger and/or unhealthier than usual, forego a heavy breakfast or lunch to balance out your party fat and calorie intake. Earlier in the day, fill yourself up with lighter fare like salad and other vegetables along with fresh fruit so that you eat less total calories for the day.

A healthy snack before the party

Half of a turkey sandwich in a



Try not to graze! Nibbling on appetizers before the bride and groom arrive at the reception adds lots of calories and fat you don't need. Stick to crunchy veggies — light on the dip.

whole-wheat pita stuffed with sprouts and tomatoes will fuel you nicely. Then, when you arrive at the festivities, you'll have the willpower to choose wisely. Another perfect pre-party snack is a quick blender shake. Blend a cup of berries with a cup of non-fat milk and crushed ice. This makes for a quick, tasty and filling treat.

Beware hors d'oeuvres

Rather than grazing on cheese, crackers and the litany of fried tidbits that often make an appearance, eat crunchy vegetables instead — just be sure you don't drown them in dip. Cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes, carrots and celery are low in calories and are full of fiber, which quickly satisfies and can help you maintain control during the main course. If you can't resist the cheese, opt for a harder vari-

ety such as parmesan and avoid softer cheeses such as brie or even cheese spreads.

Be portion size-wise

The larger the plate, the more food we tend to put on it. Small quantities of food on a big plate will make you feel as if you're missing out on what should rightfully be there. Instead, choose to eat on a decidedly small plate such as a cocktail, appetizer or dessert dish. Even a small serving of each food item will make your plate seem plentiful, but won't make your tummy feel overstuffed.

Watch alcohol intake

Alcohol drops your resistance and can result in overeating, and along with the extra calories in your meal, the 'empty' alcohol calories can be easily stored as fat.

On the side

You can better control the amount of fat and calories you consume when you ask for dressings and sauces on the side. If the items come pre-plated from the kitchen, don't be shy — just kindly ask the server if they will whip you up a fresh plate in the fashion you prefer.

Give yourself permission to say "no"... tactfully

Saying no doesn't make you rude; it's your right and privilege. You have the right to eat what you want, where and when you want, and in the amount that you want. Resist pressures from those around you who obviously don't understand what you're trying to accomplish. Consider giving the party planner advance notice detailing special dietary needs or preferences, which will be greatly appreciated, especially if the host is paying for meals "per person" and hopes to minimize waste.

Have a taste

Sometimes the mere exposure to an abundance of cake and other sweet treats will trigger a sugar craving. Don't waste calories on junk; only indulge if it's something that's extra special, and take a small taste just to satisfy. Moderation is fundamental to maintaining weight loss.

Have fun and dance

Staying active is the best way to ensure that your party schedule doesn't derail your diet. Burn calories by cutting the rug — you'll probably have far more fun and will have turned the event into a full-fledged fitness opportunity.