

Some holiday foods are especially nutritious

By Leslie Mitts
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Most people crave their favorite dishes during the holiday season—but a few of those foods may be healthier than you think.

According to health officials at IHS, holiday favorites like turkey, cranberries and sweet potatoes are healthy choices for seasonal meals as well as a part of your regular diet.

Cranberries, for instance, help prevent urinary tract infections and are good for digestive health and oral health, according to Sara Thomas, a public health nutritionist with IHS.

Cranberries are also a good source of manganese, which helps form bones and tissues, aids calcium absorption and

regulates blood sugar.

In addition, they are fat-free, sodium-free and cholesterol-free, according to health information.

Oregon is a major producer of cranberries in the U.S.

American Indians in the Northeast were the first to enjoy cranberries cooked and sweetened with honey and maple syrup, according to the George Mateljan Foundation—the producer of www.whfoods.org, a site that lists the world's healthiest foods.

Indians also used the berry, a relative of the huckleberry and the blueberry, as decoration and for medicinal purposes, the website said.

Sweet potatoes, another holiday staple, are a healthy alterna-

tive to the regular potato, Thomas said.

The sweet potato provides a large amount of vitamin A, which is important for the immune system, skin and eyes, Thomas said.

The lower glycemic index the potato features also means that it is turned into blood sugar slower than a white potato—something that is very beneficial for diabetics.

The sweet potato originated with Native Americans in the tropics thousands of years ago and are often confused with the yam.

Yams are actually a totally different plant and are rarely seen in the U.S., according to Thomas.

What many refer to as a yam

is actually a dark orange variety of the sweet potato.

The low-calorie potato is also a good source of fiber and has been proven to help stabilize blood sugar levels and protect against emphysema.

Turkey is always a wise choice of meat, Thomas said.

The meat is leaner and lower in fat than other meats and features B vitamins, proteins, iron,

zinc, phosphorous and selenium, according to the George Mateljan Foundation.

The white meat in turkey has almost no fat when cooked without the skin, and ground turkey is a healthy substitute for ground beef.

"It's just a good, healthy meat to eat," Thomas said. "Now or any time of the year."

Turkeys are native to the U.S.

and Mexico and were a part of the traditional culture for some Native American tribes, according to the George Mateljan Foundation.

At one point, Thomas said, Benjamin Franklin even nominated the turkey to be the official bird of the United States.

For more information and additional recipes, visit www.whfoods.org.

Healthy holiday recipes

Cranberry-Apple Chutney

Ingredients:
 1/4 cup unsweetened apple juice
 1 cup sweet onion, chopped
 1 cup Splenda (or other sugar substitute)
 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
 1 tsp ground cinnamon
 1/2 tsp ground ginger
 1/2 tsp ground cloves
 1 package (12 oz) fresh or frozen cranberries
 1 large Granny Smith apple, peeled, cut into 1/2 inch pieces

Directions:
 1. In a medium saucepan, mix juice, chopped onion, sugar substitute, brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger and cloves.
 2. Bring to a boil over high heat.
 3. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.
 4. Add cranberries (thawed) and cut apple.
 5. Return to simmer and cook uncovered for 20 minutes or until the mixture is very thick, stirring occasionally.
 6. Cool to room temperature and serve (or refrigerate until serving).

Oven Fries

4 small sweet potatoes (about 1 1/3 pounds)
 vegetable oil cooking spray
 Optional spices:

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1/2 teaspoon paprika (good on sweet potatoes)
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/8 teaspoon salt

Directions:
 1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray.
 2. Scrub potatoes clean. Do not peel. Cut potatoes lengthwise into strips about 1/4 inch thick, about 16-20 strips per potato.
 3. Put the potatoes in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet. Spray potato strips with non-stick baking spray. Sprinkle on your choice of spices.
 4. Bake for a total of 30 minutes, turning the potatoes over with a spatula after 15 minutes. Bake until golden. Serve immediately with fat-free ranch dip or ketchup.

Juicy Jumbo Burgers

Ingredients
 1 pound lean ground turkey
 1/2 cup oats (quick or old fashioned, uncooked)
 OR 2 packets instant oatmeal, plain
 1/4 cup egg substitute
 1/2 cup catsup or tomato sauce
 2 teaspoons prepared mustard
 1 teaspoon onion powder
 1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)

1 pinch black pepper
Directions:
 1. In medium bowl, combine all ingredients.
 2. Shape into six 1/2 inch thick patties.
 3. Broil or grill patties 4 to 6 minutes on each side till done (170 degrees in the middle using a meat thermometer). Meat should not be pink in the middle and juices should run clear.
 4. Serve on wheat hamburger buns, add toppings if you want.

(These recipes are courtesy of the IHS nutrition.)

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