



## Don't Stress Out During the Holidays

Holidays are a great time to gather family and friends. Holidays can be stressful times, too, as people try to squeeze in lots of extra activities in the same amount of time. Maybe you wonder how to find time to make special foods. You also might wonder how to afford holiday foods and/or gifts.

**Consider these tips to manage the stress and enjoy the upcoming holiday season.**

### Plan Ahead

Do some preparation ahead of time.

- Make meals in a slow cooker. Slow cookers simmer soups, chili, stew and other foods while you do other things.
- Prepare freezer meals, which are ready to thaw and pop in your oven or slow cooker on days when you are too busy to cook.
- Visit [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) and type "slow cooker" or "freezer meals" in the search box for recipe ideas.

### Simplify Your Plans

If you usually make 10 kinds of special holiday foods, ask your family what their top five special foods are. Start some new, easier holiday traditions.

- Have a potluck at your next event to spread the food preparation tasks.
- Have a "theme" party, such as healthy appetizers, baked potatoes with all the toppings or a homemade pizza party.

### Stretch Your Budget

Gifts can become a major expense during the holiday season. The following gifts do not cost a lot of money.

- If you like to cook, make "food mixes" such as soups, beverages and bread mixes. See [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) and type "gift mixes in a jar" in the search box.
- If you like to sew or knit, make a homemade gift such as mittens or scarves.
- Give the gift of time, such as free baby-sitting for busy parents, shoveling snow or help with household tasks.

### Get Some Exercise

Bundle up and enjoy outdoor activities in the winter. Exercise is a great stress reliever. Wear layers of clothing, including a hat, scarf and mittens to stay warm.

- Have fun sledding or building a snowman.
- If the weather is just too cold to be outside, visit a mall, a school gym or other place in your community that allows you to exercise inside. Turn on some music and exercise (or dance!), or use an exercise DVD or online exercise videos at home.

### Get Enough Sleep

Stress can lead to sleep loss, and losing sleep can increase your chances of getting sick. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep every night. Children need more sleep.

- Try to go to sleep at the same time every night.
- Read or relax before you go to sleep. Avoid using phones, computers and other devices.
- Avoid caffeine before bed.
- Keep the room dark and not too warm.



This colorful recipe and photo are courtesy of the Midwest Dairy Council. "Antipasti" means foods served "before the meal." Having an assortment of foods, including cheese and cured meats, before a meal is an Italian tradition.

# Holiday Antipasti Skewers

- 1 (9-ounce) package cheese-filled tortellini, cooked and cooled
  - ½ c. fat-free Italian dressing
  - 1 (8-ounce) block of reduced-fat Swiss cheese (or other white cheese, such as mozzarella)
  - 2 c. baby spinach leaves
  - 32 pieces turkey pepperoni
  - 3½ c. cherry tomatoes
  - 16 (9-inch) wooden skewers
1. Cook tortellini to the "al dente" stage (slightly firm). Cool.
  2. Place cooled tortellini in a bowl. Add dressing and marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
  3. Cut cheese into small chunks.
  4. To assemble the skewers, place tortellini, followed by spinach leaves, pepperoni slice and tomato on the skewer. Repeat the pattern to make 16 skewers.
  5. Refrigerate until serving.

Makes 16 servings. Each serving has 140 calories, 7 grams (g) fat, 7 g protein, 13 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 330 milligrams sodium.

# Holiday Appetizers Menu Idea

- Holiday Antipasti Skewers
- Popcorn sprinkled with chili powder
- Whole-grain corn tortilla chips and Mexican Corn Salsa\*
- Apple Nachos\*
- Hot apple cider with cinnamon sticks

\*See [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) for the recipes. Search by name of the recipe.

When the weather is cold, I just want to stay in my house and watch TV. I usually snack when I watch TV, and I often gain weight during the winter months. Do you have any ideas?

Getting enough exercise and eating healthfully are just as important in the winter as during the other seasons. Kids need 60 minutes of physical activity and adults need 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week, regardless of the temperature.

**If you like to have snacks while watching TV, make them count toward a healthful diet.**

- Have some crunchy carrots, apples or other fruits and vegetables.
- Make some popcorn and sprinkle with a savory seasoning, such as Cajun spice.
- If you like store-bought crackers or other snacks, be sure to measure a portion into a bowl and leave the rest in the kitchen.
- Have calorie-free beverages such as water or hot tea.

## FoodWi\$e Idea of the Month

Tortellini (used in this month's recipe) often is available in grocery stores in the refrigerator section. Cook as the package directs and serve with spaghetti sauce for a quick meal. Buy extra and freeze for easy weeknight meals. To freeze and use within two months, place the original package in the freezer. If freezing for longer than two months, place the package in a freezer bag to prevent freezer burn. Using a permanent marker, label the bag with the date of freezing.



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Contact the local office of the NDSU Extension Service for more information on food and nutrition or managing your food dollar.




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