

Seven Secrets for Surviving the Silly Season Successfully

This is the time of the year to eat drink and be merry but not “for tomorrow we will die’ as the saying goes or for that matter ‘for tomorrow we will diet’. You can manage to celebrate, enjoy the festivities and survive with more energy than you thought possible by taking of a few suggestions listed below.

It is my personal wish for you that you will not only enjoy the very best of food and wine in a way that will nourish & energize your body and spirit but that you will be with people you love respect and care for this time of year.

1. Prepare for the damage... that means nourishing, energizing and protecting the body to prepare for the onslaught.

You know you are going to indulge beyond normal this time of year, food and drink are more abundant and the options are more and more decadent leading up to the new year so to survive with reserves of energy you need to help the body out as much as you can by boosting the immune system by feeding it as much live fresh living things before and after times of celebration. So the night before you are going out to dinner have a lighter salad type dish and get a good nights rest, when you wake up start with the next step....

2. Hydrate before you Dehydrate

First thing in the morning start to hydrate your body, alcohol is highly dehydrating to the body so super-hydrating before and after the night will give your body a head start to recovery.

Drinking good quality filtered water throughout the day not just in the afternoon when you remember will not only hydrate but you then won't arrive at the function and guzzle a few drinks down because you are so thirsty. Try to alternate alcoholic drinks with some good quality water. A few more glasses of water before bed and a couple first thing when you wake up.

3. Cleanse in between the Celebrating

Giving your body a rest in between parties by gentle cleansing will help get rid of toxins that will build in the system if you consume too many high energy foods and alcohol.

Cleansing teas or even natural herb teas (that means the ones without the fake flavourings) first thing in the morning will stimulate cleansing of the liver like Dandelion root tea or a Hilda Hemmes Spring Klenz tea. The other old stand by that is sensational is half a lemon squeezed into a glass of warm filtered water.

4. Be fussy (Pick your Poisons)

One way I have reduced my consumption of celebration foods is to only drink wine if it is wine I really appreciate and only eat food that I love. If I am going to a function that is notorious for bad food I will have a luscious salad or grab some sushi before I go out. If I am caught off guard I will eat the most appealing items and have one social glass of wine. I am careful to do this discreetly so as not to offend people's hospitality, I don't want to offend anyone but my body takes first priority.

5. Alkalize whenever you get the chance

Tea, coffee, sugar, alcohol, meat, dairy, refined grains, stress, environmental toxins are all acid forming which by the end of December means your body is in a acid state if you are not counter balancing it with alkalizing influences. Your body is a breeding ground for sickness in an acid state so you need to alkalize. That means eating live fresh plant foods that are minimally processed and salads are a great example of this but make them taste good using fresh herbs, a cold pressed oil, fresh lemon (which is also alkalizing) and an unprocessed salt.

Lemons although an acid fruit are alkalizing to the body so squeeze lemon into your water and on your food when you can.

Take out some time each day for some deep breathing and a simple positive meditation.

6. Walk away or limit your exposure to stressful situations

This time of year you are often obliged to catch up with people who are a source of stress in your life. It is also a time when we put too much on our plate literally and figuratively resulting in more stress to our body, mind a spirit.

Try to avoid these situations by preparing ahead of time. Organizing to head off to another obligation when you know the alcohol is going to kick in and people start to feel less inhibited and say things everyone regrets. Walking away from a conversation (in the nicest possible way) before things get heated or tense.

Phone a friend for moral support if you are not in a position to leave the event you are at, call someone who is wise enough to give you the best advice for the situation not just what you want to hear.

7. Celebrate like there is a tomorrow!

I can hardly think of a better thing to celebrate, than another day. For most of us particularly if we celebrate wisely there will be many more times of celebration so enjoy the festivities with the next year and the next 50 years in mind. You can enjoy the champagne and pudding more knowing you are going to remember the night fondly and wake up feeling good.

Recipes for a Happy Healthy Holiday

Cherry Berry Blossom Blitzers

1 cup fresh squeezed cherry juice
1 punnet of raspberries, smashed with the back of a spoon
few drops of orange blossom water
1 cup fresh squeezed orange juice
sparkling mineral water
place juice and berries into a jug and cover with sparkling mineral water
place a handful of mint leaves in to garnish.
Serve in martini glasses

Lemon fizz

For a non alcoholic drink that still feels festive and tastes beautiful try lemon fizz. It is not a health drink but will leave you feeling less fuzzy than the normal fizz.

Juice of 4 lemons
¼ cup pure maple syrup (from Canada, of course;-) or raw honey
1 litre chilled pure sparkling mineral water
fresh lemon verbena leaves or if you can't find them, use mint leaves

Mix lemon juice with maple syrup and place in a large jug with lemon verbena leaves.

Slowly pour in the mineral water and gently stir.

Pour into champagne or martini glasses.

Corn Cakes with avocado salsa

This is an old standby that I have been serving for years. I recently did a cooking class/food & wine dinner in Toronto with 9 other high profile chefs preparing serious food and these were a hit with both the dinner guests and the chefs.

½ cup cornmeal or polenta
1 cup water
50 gm organic butter or cold pressed olive oil
1.5 cups organic wholemeal self-raising flour
1 tsp sea salt
2 eggs whisked lightly
1 cup milk
1/3 cup organic sour cream or yoghurt
handful of chives finely chopped
½ half birds eye chilli, minced

2 cups corn freshly shorn from the cob

Cook polenta with water until thickened like porridge, remove from heat and add butter. Stir until smooth and spread on a baking sheet until cool

Mix wet ingredients and dry ingredients separately and fold though together. Oilor butter a hot plate or skillet and cook pikelets until bubbles form on the surface, flip and cook 2 minutes further.

Avocado Salsa

1 ripe avocado

juice of 1 lemon

4 large or 7 smallish spring onions, chopped finely

sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Remove avocado from skin and pitt and dice. Combine so that you end up with a mix of chunks and mash then add half the lemon juice, salt and pepper and spring onions and lightly mix through and adjust according to taste, only use the whole lemon if necessary.

Top corn cake with Avocado Salsa

Tree Hugger Salad with Red Capsicum

100 gm Green beans

100 gm Snow peas

150 gm Broccoli florets

1 ripe avocado, Diced, optional

100 gm mixed lettuce leaves or spinach

1 red capsicum sliced into thin strips

Sprinkling of soy sauce, sesame oil

1 tsp of freshly grated ginger.

1 clove freshly grated garlic.

Assembly:

Toss all ingredients with the soy sauce, sesame oil, freshly grated garlic and ginger.

Sprinkle with Chickie mix.

Toasted Chickie mix

250 gm Sunflower seeds, Toasted until golden

250 gm Sesame seeds, Toasted until golden

1 tbsp Natural soy sauce

2 tsp Sesame oil

Toast seeds on separate trays (sunflower seeds take longer).

After the seeds are toasted, evenly coat each tray of seeds with half each of the soy sauce & sesame oil (use disposable gloves).

Combine the two seeds. Cool. Place in an airtight container.

Beetroot, Green Bean and Goats Feta salad

2 beetroots covered in glad bake and then foil, place in oven for 1 hour or until tender, this can vary depending on the beets.

300gm steamed green beans

50 gm Meredith Goats Feta, drained of oil

Continental parsley

Toasted pumpkin seeds (toss pumpkin seeds in olive oil, sea salt and bake until they puff up)

Dressing;

1 tablespoon fresh squeezed grapefruit juice (you can use blood orange or tangelo when in season)

2 Tablespoons first cold pressed extra virgin olive oil

Sea salt to taste.

Slice beets, gently toss with green beans and picked parsley, coat and toss with dressing, gently arrange dabs of goats cheese and sprinkle with pumpkin seeds.

Asparagus

4 bunches or 1 kilo or freshly picked asparagus
snap off thick ends and trim stalks

Place asparagus into a large saucepan with a lid.

Place 3 Tbsp of water in the saucepan, cover with a lid and steam for 3 minutes.

Remove from the pan and drizzle with organic old pressed olive oil, a sprinkle of sea salt and fine grating of parmesan grana pandano or reggiano (about 30 grams grated with a microplane grater will be plenty) and a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

Serve immediately.

Roast Organic Chook with Zucchini Stuffing

Rub a 2 kg organic chicken that has been allowed to come to room temperature (allow 1 hour from the time it has been in the fridge) with olive oil, sea salt, Dukkah and a crushed clove of fresh garlic.

Place the chicken on top of lots of baby carrots or medium carrots cut into chunks or quartered length wise, plenty of parsley leaves, lovage leaves (if you can find them) and 6 whole garlic cloves. Sprinkle with a little sea salt and drizzle with a little olive oil.

Place chicken a top of the vegetables in a roasting pan in a 190 C oven for 35 minutes, turn the oven down to 170C and bake for another 10 minutes, remove and rest for at least 20 minutes in a warm spot.

Zucchini Stuffing

This stuffing tastes so good on its own I've had hard-core carnivores prefer it to the roast chicken or turkey. I'd recommend cooking some in a separate baking container for vegetarians instead of highly processed meat like soy products.

2 cups of solid traditionally made bread that passes the squish test, cut into 2cm cubes
1 onion, diced
3 sticks of celery, finely chopped hearts if you can get them
4 Tbsp of organic butter
½ cup of flat leaf parsley leaves, chopped roughly
2 medium zucchini, grated on the large setting
1 granny smith apple finely chopped or grated on the large setting
½ tsp of ground sage
1 Tbsp or freshly chopped thyme leaves
1 egg
1 tsp salt

Sauté onion, celery zucchini, parsley in butter for 5 minutes until soft, and slightly golden. Allow to cool for 5 minutes, then add all remaining ingredients together and squeeze into the cavity of the chicken. Any leftovers place around the chicken on top of the carrots.

Chick Pea, Eggplant and Farro Salad

Chick Peas

1 cup dried chick peas
1 tsp bicarb soda
plenty of filtered water

Soak chickpeas overnight in a bowl with enough water to allow for twice their size. Add bicarb soda and allow to soak. Drain the water the next day and place in a saucepan with enough water to cover 2 inches about the chick peas. Simmer for at least 1 hour or until tender. Depending on the brand they can take up to 90 minutes so allow time and be patient. You can do then ahead of time, drain, cool and freeze them. Once chick peas are cooked drizzle with a little olive oil, sprinkle with a little sea salt and a sprinkle of Mt. Zero Dukkah.

Farro

1 cup whole Farro or spelt grain
2 cups filtered water

Simmer in covered saucepan for 30 minutes, allow to sit covered until cool.

Eggplant

3 medium eggplant, young firm and heavy for their size with clear taught skin and no blemishes.

Slice into thick 3cm slices and brush with olive oil, sea salt and Dukkah
Bake in a 190°C oven for 30 minutes or until golden on the outside and tender inside.

½ cup Roasted or dried pistachio nuts or hazel nuts
1 cup of leaves from continental flat leaf parsley

Gently toss chick peas, farro, eggplant, parsley and pistachios.
Drizzle with dressing.

Dressing

½ cup plain organic quark or yoghurt from Schultz's at Timboon
1 garlic clove crushed
1 tsp sea salt
juice of ½ a lemon
2 Tbsp organic cold pressed olive oil

A Very Berry Christmas

The best thing about Christmas in Australia is all the amazing fresh foods that are locally and seasonally available and berries top the list.

The most luscious dessert suited to our climate and is completely low maintenance feels luxurious and indulgent and completely free of any negative impact on the body is a bowl of ripe organic berries and stone fruits. It is so simple and so easy and at the end of a meal with a great deal of food so much lighter to digest than a complex pudding laden with highly processed ingredients. With what I save in time and effort I spend on berries, cherries, nectarines and peaches. Play with what you can find available that is ripe and yet still holding its shape. Here is my favourite mix:

Raspberries
Cherries pitted
Nectarines, sliced
Peaches, sliced
Blueberries

Place in a big bowl, grate the zest of a fresh lime, squeeze the juice from the lime and if the fruits are not quite sweet enough dissolve a tsp of raw honey in the lime juice and drizzle on and serve.

Serve with your favourite flavour of Gundowring's Ice Cream (vanilla, raspberry, lime, toasted honey and walnut or their Christmas pudding flavour would suit) or some fresh honey and vanilla infused organic double cream.

Shopping at Christmas

Go to places where others don't, avoid the stressed out masses

Shop at farmer's markets where you'll find people are less stressed and happier shopping.

Shop at times others are less likely to shop

Shop online, have gifts delivered if you can't make it or invite people over to give gifts if you have too much travelling to do.

Give experiences rather than things we don't really need or will end up in landfill within a few months to years.

Food Shopping

Bread - Baker D. Chiraco for beautiful traditional loaves with flavour, texture and substance

Shop $\frac{3}{4}$ 149 Fitzroy St. St. Kilda
9534 3777

Mt. Zero Olive Oil – olives, olive oil, lentils, chick peas, farro and Dukkah
www.mtzeroolives.com

Farmers Markets – you can get everything need for holiday entertaining here and it will be the most soulfull way you have ever shopped

www.mfm.com.au

[Veg Out, St Kilda](#)

1st Saturday every month

[Collingwood Children's Farm](#)

2nd Saturday every month

[Gasworks, Albert Park](#)

3rd Saturday every month

[Slow Food Melbourne](#)

[Abbotsford Convent](#)

4th Saturday every month

Passionfoods – 219 Ferrar St. South Melbourne 9690 9339

Organic Wholefoods – 452 Lygon St. East Brunswick – 9384 0288 or 277

Smith St. Collingwood - 9416 5365

Macro wholefoods Richmond, Black Rock and Armadale

Plump in Yarraville

All major food markets in Melbourne now have organic sections and shops

Organic meat

Rendina's Butchery; Bio-Dynamic & Organic Meats

info@rendinasbutchery.com.au 9857 6669

253b Belmore Rd, Balwyn North VIC 3104

www.greenlinedelivery.com.au

www.organicmeat.com.au

Eat Slowly and only the best of what you can afford. Not that long ago many people remember what it is like to just have one good Christmas meal and to not have a huge banquet but a respectable amount of food. Think more vegetables than meat and fruit based desserts with as little refined sugar as possible.

Consider buying an organic and free range chicken over a big turkey and serving more vegetable dishes.

Bring homemade non-alcoholic bubbly in the form of fresh juices topped up with sparkling mineral water.

Make gifts in the kitchen as a family activity

This is so simple and so no fuss that you can make it on one pan with two ingredients and you would be amazed at how much people love it!

Coconut chocolate macaroons

1kg organic coconut desiccated coconut, lightly toasted
700 gm 70% organic chocolate finely chopped

Place coconut on a baking tray in a 170 C oven and check every 3 minutes and toss the coconut so that the toasting is even. Remove when there is a light golden colour over most of the coconut.

Take the finely sliced chocolate and coat coconut.

Turn off oven and place the chocolate and coconut in with the door open waiting for the chocolate to be fully melted. Don not close the door, you do not want to cook the chocolate. Mix thoroughly and drop dessert spoonfuls on a baking tray lined with silicone baking paper.

Allow to harden in a cool part of the kitchen and if it is warm in the house, place in the fridge. Remove from the tray and place into silicone lined gift boxes.

If you want to add more festive ingredients like dried cherries, cranberries or muscatels then just add a little less coconut

Making it through the holidays gracefully...

- ✓ The festive holiday period is a time where we spend a lot of money showing people how little we know about them. The hardest gift to give is time getting to know people better, finding out what it is that is important to them or what matters most.
- ✓ Control your schedule rather than letting it control you. How? Learn how to say no to everything and yes to only the things that really make a difference.
- ✓ Consider organizing catch up's after Christmas when things are less demanding.
- ✓ What about sending New Year Cards instead of Christmas Cards. Tell people how your last calendar year was made better for having contact with them. Does a card with a printed message and your signature really make a difference? Would a phone call to let people know what a difference they made to you or your business, be better?
- ✓ Assess how much of Christmas is about not upsetting others and balance it with not upsetting yourself, you count too. Remember when communicating this to people, you will be far more effective in getting a peaceful outcome if you can always phrase it from a loving place rather than a defensive or offensive position. Think of how you can say what you need to say in a way that they can receive it.