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## 9 Ways to Deal with Dietary Restrictions at Holiday Meals

The holiday season is here and with that comes fancy dinners, work parties, potlucks and family gatherings. While breaking bread with your favorite people can be one of life's simple joys, anxiety over what to make when feeding those with special dietary needs can make things feel complicated. Here are nine tips and tricks for hosting a holiday dinner that everyone can enjoy.

### 1. Ask for Advice

Who knows best? The person with special dietary needs! Once you have a menu in mind, discuss it with your guests ahead of time and ask how they can best be accommodated.

### 2. Read Labels

Dairy, gluten and non-vegetarian ingredients are found in many packaged foods. If you are not sure if an ingredient is safe for your party guests, ask the person you're accommodating or skip it.

### 3. Don't Cross-Contaminate

Use separate tongs when grilling meat and veggie burgers to spare the vegetarian foods from meat juice. Don't bake a nut-free cookie on the same tray you just roasted almonds. Thoroughly wash the strainer in between draining wheat spaghetti noodles and gluten-free ones. Being mindful of opportunities for cross-contamination can lower the risk of serving foods that your guest might not be able to eat.

### 4. Make Simple Swaps

Tossing your veggies with olive oil instead of butter means that the vegans and those with dairy allergies can enjoy them too. Use vegetable stock instead of chicken or beef stock and the side dishes so more people can enjoy them.

### 5. Leave the Toppings on the Side

Sometimes it's just one or two ingredients that rule out a dish for those with dietary issues. If you leave the bacon crumble on the side, those who eat meat can still have it, and the vegetarians can eat the dish too.



## **6. Build a Bowl**

Rather than designing a menu with several parts, build a buffet of toppings and let your guests do the rest. From a yogurt parfait brunch to a smoky burrito bowl, there are many options for having a casual meal that is satisfying for everyone. Having an diverse spread of options will allow your guests to create a meal that fits their needs.

## **7. Serve Delicious Drinks**

Even those not drinking alcohol enjoy fancy mock-tails. Include everyone in the festivities by making a pitcher or two of fruit and herb infused waters or a dry bar with seltzer, juices and herbs.

## **8. Polish Your Sales Pitch**

We tend to be wary of foods we cannot easily identify. To encourage everyone to try different dishes, write the menu on a chalkboard or place a menu card on the table. On your buffet line, label each dish with enticing adjectives and include ingredients. Not only does this encourage a picky eater to try new things, it also helps guests avoid food allergens.

## **9. Have Fun!**

Remember: You don't have to accommodate your guests for every single dish. If your holiday dinner would not be complete without your grandmother's Yorkshire pudding, include it. Missing your personal favorites might lower your own enjoyment at the occasion. With a well-planned dinner, all of your guests can be happy and well fed.

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