



12 Gifts for Christmas

A guide to survive thanksgiving, the 12 days of Christmas, 8 days of Hanukah, NYE and everything in between.

By Your In House Nutritionist :

Kellen Kurtz



The 12 days of Christmas, 8 days of Hanukkah and the 40 days this year that exist between Thanksgiving and New Years Day are always filled. They are packed with hustle and bustle. Jammed with traditions, customs and holiday parties. And if we are honest most of them are filled with excess, indulgence and every excuse in the book to do and have whatever we want: grandma's epic sugar cookies, mom's Chex mix, the holiday cocktail and one more glass of wine "it is the holidays"!

While they can be merry and bright, we can wind up feeling and looking more like Santa than we would prefer. We work hard for so much of the year. Times of feast and celebration are needed. But with the excess we can end up losing ground, moving backwards and just feeling pretty awful. Ideally, we all want to learn how to not just survive in the holiday season. 40 days is a long time! Small incremental choices we makes can set us up to not just survive but thrive this season.



These first three are staples of my world. They have been instrumental to my own food journey and food freedom. They come from the one and only Melissa Hartwig's book, *Food Freedom Forever*. It is a mini-dialogue you can run in your head every time you are faced with something outside your normal healthy habits and decisions.

Here are my 12 little gifts to you this holiday season. I'll call them the 12 gifts of giving! They are tips and tricks that I have picked up from fellow nutritionists, life lessons and habit junkies. I have found them extremely helpful in my own journey!

12 Gifts to Survive the Holidays

1. Do I want it?

No like seriously DO YOU ACTUALLY WANT IT? When faced with that drink, grandma's fruitcake or the 7th serving of stuffing, the limited edition peppermint Oreos your coworkers brought in, ask yourself: "Do I actually want it?" Is tradition, obligation or laziness running the show? During this season a thousand treats and holiday traditions are shoved in our faces. Take a moment. Pause. Ask yourself a simple question: "Do I want it?" If the answer is no! There you go! Move along. If yes, ask a follow up question.

2. Is it worth it?

So you have determined you want something. Great! That isn't enough for you to have it. The next question on its heels should be: "Is it worth it?" Whatever the outcome you may face for having it: the raging hangover with 3 kids needing you tomorrow? A return of a teenage breakout? Mild bloating? The dreadful feeling of punishment that you will have tomorrow to work yourself overboard at the gym? We all have reactions to the decisions we make. Some of them are fine. Some are not. We get to be the ones to decide if the result of a decision is one we are willing to take. You say, "I want it, but it's not worth it" then move on and find something that fits both want it and worth it! You could say, "Yep, I want it! Yep, totally worth it." Then you move onto the third component to this triad!

3. One bite rule.

You have decided YOU WANT IT (Oh heck yes, I want my moms Chex mix). IT IS WORTH IT (Sure, I'll take the sluggish morning



and annoying bloating that happens after I eat that kind of processed food). What comes next? You have one bite, one drink. Just one. And reassess. After one bite, “do I still actually want it? Did one bite satisfy? Is it really worth it?” I can’t tell you how many scones and ice cream scoops I have left behind because of this third step. Just because you have one bite doesn’t mean you have to have it all. If you still answer the questions “yep I still want it! Yep, it’s still worth it” Then commit! You are a grown up! You get to decide what you do and don’t eat! Don’t wallow in guilt and shame about what you should or shouldn’t have eaten. If you have regret after you have made your big girl decision, put that info in your toolbox for the next time you are faced with the decision. Maybe next time you will decide, “I actually don’t want it cuz I know it’s not worth it!”

4. Plan ahead.

Plan ahead.

Failing to plan is planning to fail. This is not the time of year to fly by the seat of your pants. Planning will go a long way to help you maintain your health and fitness during the season. There are many nutritional roadblocks to plan for, here are some examples:

Plan your Meals to be Balanced- What should they look like?

Always be able to answer: “Where is the Protein? Where are my Veggies? Where are my Fats?”

Plan your days- Literally, plan out your days, hour by hour, starting with a Healthy balanced breakfast, your To-Do’s and your Meals! This helps tremendously, so you don’t get caught in an Emergency situation!

Plan for the occasion-

Are you heading to the mall to hammer out your holiday gifts?

Don’t go empty handed, wind up starving and having to cram down Panda Express? Pack snacks! Think ahead! Know where you can find food that serves you!

Are you headed to the company Christmas party? Consider pre-eating a balanced meal so you aren't relying on finger foods to fill you up. Think about setting a limit on the amount of drinks you will have during a given party!

5. Strategize for the downfall.

We will “fail” particularly during this holiday season. We will have one too many “somethings”, lose control over our choices, fall victim to the holiday hustle! It is just something that this season brings. More important than striving for perfect holiday decisions is having a game plan for what you will do when you go astray! Will you make sure the day after a holiday party is one where there are no excuses on eating outside your normal bounds? No drinking? Do you have to move? Think about the decisions you currently make in your everyday life that lead you to success. Often times we get stuck in a cycle that sounds something like this, “I might as well have that extra piece of cake today because I was so off yesterday! What’s the difference?” James Clear, author of the amazing book *Atomic Habits*, says “The first mistake is never the one that ruins you. It is the spiral of repeated mistakes that follows. Missing once is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new habit.” Make it a goal to never miss twice this holiday season (in food choices, training sessions, picking up peace over stress).



6. Move more.

This is simple. Make it your goal to move. EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. Maybe it's just 15 min. Maybe it is dancing at the holiday party. Put in some extra time to move your body. Commit to the holiday specific program your gym may have! Consider lifting more, heavier and using all those holiday treats to fuel your current goals rather than detour them. Keep movement a priority during the craze!

7. Drink more water.

Through the season we can forget water. Water is the most essential nutrient to the body and it is the most common nutritional deficiency. We not only forget to drink water but we also seem to down peppermint mochas and cranberry cocktail like

its our day job. Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages are the two most dehydrating drinks we can consume. We have to be consuming extra water to make up for them! Try to consume a minimum of half your body weight (in oz.) of water every single day (For example: if you weight 180 pounds, you need 90 oz. of water EVERY DAY!)

Drinking water can also help you not drink so much during festivities. Consider alternating (or only drinking) soda water with a slice of lime at your company parties. No one knows you aren't drinking! You won't get annoying comments about being a scrooge AND you'll be staying hydrated AND hitting your nutritional goals.



8. Eat more veggies.

The holidays are no exception. Our plates can be 2/3-3/4 of veggies. All the colors. All the kinds. Cooked in as many different ways as possible. At your party, fill that plate with veggies first and then move on! If you have to go to a potluck, offer to bring a side. And bring a nourishing veggie side! There are a thousand AMAZING holiday recipes that will knock anyone's socks off! Some of my favorites are [these](#) Brussels sprouts from Danielle Walker and [this](#) potato alternative from Nom Nom Paleo. Or [these](#) green beans from primal gourmet.

9. Out with the old & in with the new.

We all have holiday traditions. Maybe you have done it every year since you can remember. Some of those traditions are great to keep going. Some of them are important to maintain. But there are some that only add weight to the holidays and don't bring us joy or peace. Consider take our traditions that you don't actually like! Add new traditions that fit your current self and bring you closer to your life goals. Tired of making grandma's fruit cake every year? Find a new recipe that you actually like! Frustrated when your family sits around on Thanksgiving watching football literally all day? Consider bringing in a new tradition to mix up



and add to the day, like a turkey trot, a family walk, or pushups to match the score of the game.

10. Say no to the holiday craze.

Believe it or not the weight (literally and figuratively speaking) of the holidays doesn't only come from what we are eating, drinking and the lack of exercise we are doing! The stress of the season and constant go-go-go takes its toll on our bodies and can be the biggest barrier to pursuing health in the holiday season. I challenge you this season to prioritize peace. Can you commit to meditating 5 minutes a day? Can you actually schedule in some non-negotiable downtime for you and yours? Take more bubble baths? Read a page in that book you love every day? Take a few moments to find one thing you can do to boycott the craze!

11. Pick one small habit to focus on in the season.

Often times one of the biggest reasons we seem to “fail” is because we have set ourselves up to do so. We set goals that are too far out of reach and unattainable. This is absolutely true during the holiday season. Even in this post, there are 12 goals you can focus on! It is easy to say “Ok, I am gonna do all of these all the time.” Even with that commitment, we are not setting ourselves up for success. Another gem that comes from James Clear is this: Set your goals and expectations just BARELY outside your comfort zone and stick to it. For example of instead of committing to make it to the gym every day for a workout, commit to putting your running/gym shoes on every day and making it out the door. Even if that is literally all you do! Instead of committing to eating “Perfect” through the season, commit to one day a week (or meal day) of “eating clean.” Set goals that are attainable so every time you meet your goal you are exercising your I CAN DO IT muscle rather than wearing out your I CAN'T DO IT one!



12. What's my post holiday game plan?

For every season, turn turn turn.... We have seasons in life. The holiday season is typically one of feast! One of Celebration! And there really isn't anything wrong with that. We should enjoy the season that it is. Embrace it! But we should also recognize that it is not where we stay. It is equally important to turn into another season! Set yourself up for success and spend time thinking of what you will do AFTER this crazy is over. I will surely run another lifestyle and nutrition challenge in January to help us recover from the season. Sign up and commit early! Jump on something like a whole30 bandwagon. Allow this time of surplus to fuel and prepare you to learn in the following season how to set healthy boundaries, create strong habits and ultimately raise us to a way of life where we thrive!

There you have it!

Hopefully these 12 gifts of giving do just that, keep on giving! Think of them as a holiday survival guide! Hopefully they set you and yours up for a holiday season filled with more than just eggnog, and cheap tinsel! Hopefully they set you up for holiday freedom and feeling pretty great about it! Happy Holidays! Raise a glass in celebration of all that you have done this year (Or maybe before you do ask your self if you really want it!)

