



NO STRESS, *Just Fest*

Unwrap seasonal stress
& enjoy some fuss-free
festive recipe inspiration

FIRST, SOME QUESTIONS

Do you eagerly anticipate the holiday season only to spend it feeling unwell?

Are you lacking in energy while everyone around you seems to be the life and soul?

Are indigestion tablets a regular part of your holiday diet?

Winter is the perfect storm for all of those coughs and sneezes. Lovely warm, cosy and crowded spaces and that stressful run-up to Christmas is just what all of those bugs and viruses need to thrive in. It is well known that stress can take a toll on our immune system. When your defences are already weaker than they should be and with a steady stream of eager germs thrown into the mix, it's no surprise that many of us feel under the weather around the Christmas period.

Stress can also have a negative impact on blood sugar control and we all know that when we are stressed we're probably not making the best food choices. Throw in an abundance of sweets, chocolates, puddings and cakes over the festive period and you've pretty much got blood sugar that's on the ride of its life!

Poor blood sugar control can affect our ability to have a restful night's sleep and that disrupts our immune system, meaning that pair of novelty socks won't be your only unwanted gift this Christmas.

And what about the packets of indigestion tablets? Come Boxing Day, are you scouring the bathroom cabinets and kitchen cupboards hoping to find a packet of antacids that no-one else got to first?

Stress is one of the main protagonists of heartburn and indigestion. We're not resting and digesting our meals but ploughing through them at speed in the run up to Christmas, because there's so much to do. That rubbish night's sleep that you had because heartburn woke you up is just adding to the stress and blood sugar that's bouncing around all over the place is not helping either.

So what can you do to try and make this festive season less stressful and hopefully one that you can enjoy without bugs and viruses becoming uninvited guests to your celebrations?

Read on for our top tips to help you to navigate this time of year more peacefully and then enjoy some fuss-free recipes that you can enjoy not just making, but eating too.



TIP 1 - MAINTAIN A BALANCED DIET

Yes, it's the festive season, and yes, there's lots of goodies to be enjoyed but remember, Christmas is a handful of days. Supporting your stress levels and your immune system comes from all of the foods that tend to be ignored over the holidays - vegetables and fruits, wholegrains and healthy fats.

Ensuring that your diet is as diverse as possible in the run up to the big day will provide you with enough energy to cope with the added stress and provide the nutrients needed to regulate your stress hormones, as well as keeping your immune system robust and able to fend off seasonal nasties. Include as much colour as possible and we are not talking here about making the many colours in a Quality Street tin a major food group!

There's a whole lot of green, orange, white, red and purple in the fruit and veg aisles at the moment so go and fill your baskets and your energy levels.

TIP 2 - BE MORE MINDFUL

Being stressed is a sure-fire way to make poor food choices, send your blood sugar off on a roller-coaster and put your immune system into a tail spin.

Using some tried and tested stress busting techniques such as gentle exercise, yoga, breathing exercises and eating more mindfully can all help to put your body back on an even keel and ready to rest and digest the food that it needs to keep you going.

Eating slowly and without distraction, putting your knife and fork down between mouthfuls, chewing properly and giving your body time to recognise that you are full before heading back in for seconds are all excellent ways of avoiding over-eating and indigestion.



TIP 3 - TAKE CARE OF YOUR SLEEP

Christmas parties can mean late nights which is all the more reason to make sure that you prioritise sleep on your nights in. During sleep your body rests and repairs and that includes your immune system.

Treat yourself to warm baths and turning off mobile phones and laptops at least 2 hours before bed will see you relaxing ready for sleep. Avoid heavy evening meals and alcohol which may help you sleep but it won't allow you to stay asleep.

Having a regular bedtime and wake up time on the days when you are not celebrating will also ensure that you are getting enough quality sleep which will help you to be full of festive energy.

TIP 4 - BE WISE ABOUT ALCOHOL

Of course, lots of us like a drink at Christmas and often alcohol is what we turn to at the end of a busy, stressful day. However, if you follow us regularly you will know that alcohol is one of the main causes of heartburn as well as not being particularly helpful when it comes to supporting the immune system or aiding restful sleep.

If you are drinking alcohol this Christmas, please eat AND drink so that the alcohol is released more slowly into the blood stream - we can learn a lot from our continental cousins here where alcohol is very rarely drunk without food.

Alternate an alcohol drink with a glass of water which will not only slow down the amount of alcohol in your blood stream at one time but allow it to be passed through the liver more effectively.

TIP 5 - ENJOY SOME FUSS-FREE FOOD

Read on for a few of our favourite fuss-free recipes that we love at this time of the year. Not only are they easy and quick to make when time is of the essence but are full of the nutrients needed to keep our immune systems strong and resilient, as well as being deliciously tasty. We know you will love them!



CRISPY GNOCCHI TRAYBAKE

After a busy day Christmas shopping, wrapping, prepping and everything else-ing, a traybake is dinner on the table in less than an hour. This one is satisfying and full of flavour and texture.



SERVINGS: 4

PREPPING TIME: 10 MINS

COOKING TIME: 45 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

1 head of broccoli, cut into bite sized florets and the stalks cut into 1cm chunks
2 leeks, finely sliced
1 tsp chilli flakes (optional)
2 tbsp olive oil
400g fresh gnocchi
3 garlic cloves, finely sliced
1 lemon, zested and then cut into wedges
50g of finely grated mature cheddar
A small handful of finely chopped parsley

METHOD

- Heat the oven to 200C/ 180C fan / gas 6.
- Tip the broccoli into a large roasting pan with the leeks, chilli flakes, half of the olive oil and 3 tbsp water.
- Season well and toss to coat the vegetables.
- Roast for 20 minutes, until the vegetables are tender.
- Combine the gnocchi with the garlic, remaining oil and lemon zest, tip into the roasting pan with the vegetables, stir and sprinkle over the cheese.
- Cook for another 20-25 minutes or until the gnocchi and cheese are golden.
- Sprinkle over the parsley and serve with the lemon wedges.

FRUITY SPICED MUFFINS

Full of the flavours of Christmas, these muffins are deliciously moist and can be enjoyed as a light Christmas morning breakfast or at teatime with a cuppa.



SERVINGS: 10

PREPPING TIME: 15 MINS PLUS COOLING

COOKING TIME: 25 MINS

INGREDIENTS

200g coarsely grated pumpkin or squash
2 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground mixed spice
1/2 tsp ground ginger
175g Greek yoghurt
2 eggs
125ml milk of choice
1 tbsp maple syrup
175g wholemeal flour
100g raisins or mixed dried fruit
1 tsp baking powder
25g chopped pecans

METHOD

- Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.
- Line a muffin pan with 10 paper cases that have been very lightly oiled or use silicon muffin cases
- Put the pumpkin in bowl and partially cover with a tea cloth to let the steam escape and microwave for 5 minutes on full power until it is tender.
- Mash the pumpkin with the spices and leave to cool.
- Once cooled, beat the yoghurt, eggs, milk and maple syrup into the pumpkin and then fold in the flour, fruit and baking powder until well mixed. Depending on the pumpkin, you may have to add a drop more milk.
- Scoop into the muffin cases (an ice cream scoop works really well) and sprinkle over the pecans.
- Bake for 20-25 minutes until well risen.
- Serve warm or cold - they will keep well chilled in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

WINTER PANZANELLA

With all of the colours of the festive season, this delightful salad makes a refreshing Boxing Day lunch.



SERVINGS: 6

PREPPING TIME: 25 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 3 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

1 large banana shallot, peeled and sliced
2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
1 tsp caster sugar
20g fresh chopped chives
200g soft goat's cheese
3.5 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp maple syrup
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
2 oranges, 1 segmented, 1 juiced
30g pumpkin seeds
80g shop bought croutons
1 head of radicchio, leaves separated
225g cooked beetroot, cut into small wedges

METHOD

- Toss the shallots in the vinegar, sugar and a large pinch of salt in a glass or china bowl and set aside to "pickle" for 20 minutes.
- Spread the chives on a plate and roll heaped teaspoons of the cheese in them and then put the balls into the fridge until needed.
- Make the dressing by combining 3 tbsp olive oil with the maple syrup, mustard and orange juice in a jug and set aside.
- Heat the remaining oil in a small frying pan, add the pumpkin seeds with a pinch of salt and very gently cook until they start to pop. Then tip them out onto some kitchen paper.
- Give the dressing a whisk, add the croutons and leave these to soak for a minute or two.
- Now it's time to assemble by dividing the radicchio leaves (tear larger ones) between 6 plates or put them all onto a large sharing platter. Top with the segmented orange and beetroot wedges. Scatter over the goat's cheese balls, toasted pumpkin seeds and pickled shallots.
- Spoon over the dressing and croutons and serve immediately.

RUDOLPH'S MOCKTAIL

And for our final flourish, Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without Rudolph! This mocktail will bring a smile to the face of everyone you serve it to.



SERVINGS: 8

PREPPING TIME: 30 MINS

INGREDIENTS

For the cranberry syrup

250 g fresh or frozen cranberries
80 g granulated sugar
80 ml water

For the Rudolph faces

8 large, white marshmallows
16 cloves
3 - 4 sprigs fresh rosemary, cut in pieces (approx. 3-4 cm)
8 fresh cranberries
4 wooden skewers cut in half
4 cocktail sticks cut in half

To assemble

300 g ice cubes
1 litre ginger ale, chilled

Tips: The syrup can be frozen or made up to 2 days in advance and kept chilled in fridge until needed. For a stronger, spicier flavour, substitute 500ml ginger ale with 500ml ginger beer.

METHOD

- First make the syrup. Combine the cranberries, sugar, and water in a saucepan and bring to a simmer over a medium heat and cook gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a large jug or bowl and let cool completely.
- Now for the fun part! For each marshmallow, insert 2 cloves as eyes, add 2 rosemary sprigs as antlers and attach 1 cranberry to half a cocktail stick as a nose. Thread your Rudolph onto a wooden skewer. Repeat this step to make 8 Rudolph decorations.
- Now to put it all together. Crush the ice, either in a blender or with a rolling pin and place in a large jug. Pour over the cooled cranberry syrup. Add about 700ml of ginger ale, stirring gently. Divide the mixture evenly between 8 cocktail glasses and top up each glass with the remaining ginger ale. Garnish each one with a Rudolph and serve immediately.

Recipe & Photo Credit: Cookidoo

A FINAL THOUGHT

We know that even with the best will in the world all that festive feasting might leave us with some unwanted gifts - dodgy digestion, weight gain, lack of energy and that “when will it be summer again?” question hanging in the air.

Here at True Food Nutrition, we know that sometimes an extra hand is needed to guide you back to feeling well and rested again long after that last verse of Auld Lang Syne has been sung. If you think that you would benefit from our experience, please feel free to book a call to find out how we can help you to look forward to summer with a spring in your step.

We hope that you enjoy the festivities to come and we wish you health and happiness for 2025.

Use the QR codes to book your free call

Amanda



Cancer support
Acid reflux
Menopause
Chronic stress



Nicci



Acid reflux
Digestive Issues
IBS
Crohn's Disease



Nicola



Acid Reflux
Weight Management
Blood sugar
Energy & Focus



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The information is for educational purposes and must not replace medical advice.

If you have a diagnosed medical condition, you should consult a doctor before making any significant changes to your diet.