WLG 139

WestVirginiaUniversity
EXTENSION SERVICE

You Can Have Your Cake and Eat it, Too

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Educational Objectives

1. Identify one way to reduce calories in desserts.
2. Learn how to improve the Omega 3 and Omega 6 balance in desserts.
3. Become more conscious of dessert choices.

Raise your hand if you ate dessert at least once in the past week?

If you raised your hand you are not alone. Seventy percent of Americans consume dessert at least once a week.

What would a birthday be without cake and ice cream, Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie or breakfast without muffins? While desserts tickle our palate, they generally contain a lot of calories and sugar and have little nutritional value.

Do you know how many calories are in a piece of chocolate cake with chocolate frosting? The answer is 400.

How long would the average individual need to walk to burn off those calories? The answer is almost two hours of brisk walking.

How many calories are in 1 cup of vanilla ice cream? The answer is 270 calories. It would take an hour of ballroom dancing to burn off those calories.

Most of us don't really like to exercise nor do we want to give up our desserts. This lesson is about ways to lessen the calories in desserts and improve the nutritional value.

Replace Oil with Fruits and Veggies to Lower Calories

Oil or shortening is a key ingredient for a tender, moist piece of cake or melt-in-your-mouth muffins. Unfortunately, oils are high in calories. Replacing half the oil or shortening with unsweetened applesauce, finely-grated squash, pureed fruits or finely-grated beets reduces calories and adds vitamins and minerals to your dessert.

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Experiment with the amount of oil you replace. You can replace all of it, but your product may have a gummy texture. Try replacing one-quarter of the oil and increase the amount each time until you achieve the desired texture. To maintain a tender crumb, mix only until blended – overmixing can cause cake to become tough.

Cake mixes generally have the directions for a lower calorie version on the box. Because shortening is already an ingredient, it may call for all the oil to be replaced with applesauce.

Single-serve unsweetened applesauce containers are usually a ½ cup. Keeping a pack in your pantry will allow easy substitutions.

Cookie baking note: If you want crisp cookies, you cannot replace the shortening. If you like soft cookies, then the applesauce trick will work.

Improve the Omega 6 and Omega 3 Balance

William E. Lands, Ph.D., is one of the world's most respected and published fatty acid scientists. He discovered that as society has moved from using butter and lard sparingly to using soybean and corn oil extensively, our Omega 6 and Omega 3 balance has moved grossly out of proportion. Too much Omega 6 and not enough Omega 3 can lead to inflammation and has also been shown to increase depression.

Increasing Omega 3 in baked goods is very simple. Most recipes for baked goods call for vegetable oil, which is usually made from soybeans or corn. It is very high in Omega 6 and very low in Omega 3. Switching to olive oil, canola oil, coconut oil or butter from grass-fed cows will significantly improve that balance as all are higher in Omega 3. Remember, though, that the calorie counts are all very similar so using an alternative for half of the oil is needed to reduce calories.

Another way to boost good Omega 3 is to put 1 tablespoon of ground flax meal or chia seeds in the measuring cup before you measure the flour. Flax meal is generally dark brown, which is fine in recipes that are dark in color. Use golden flax meal in light colored desserts. Using a mix? Simply add a tablespoon or two of flax meal to add some essential Omega 3 and fiber to your diet.

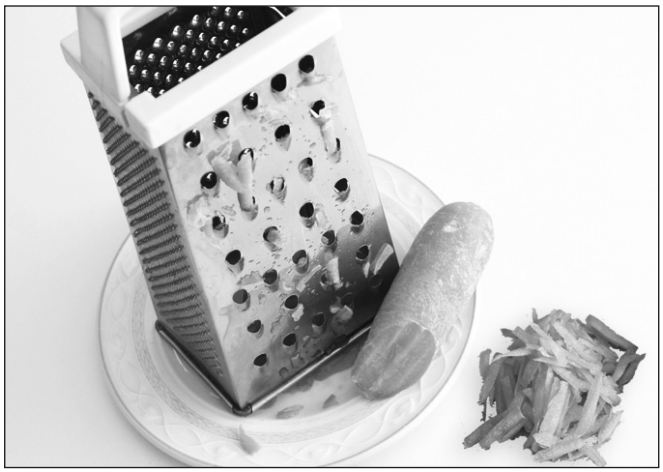
Store ground flax meal in the refrigerator. Whole flax seed must be ground in order for our bodies to digest it.

Reduce the Sugar to Lower Calorie Counts

The average American eats 22 teaspoons of added sugar a day. Our taste buds have come to expect dessert to be very sweet. Our addiction to sugar is fueling a growing health crises. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2012, "9.3 percent of the U.S. population has diabetes . . . 37 percent of U.S. adults age 20 years or older had prediabetes (51 percent of those aged 65 years or older)."

Dessert is one of those pleasures that most of us don't want to give up. There are ways to lower the sugar volume while still having good-tasting desserts. The next time you bake, reduce the

sugar by 1 tablespoon per cup. You won't notice a difference. Then continue to reduce by another tablespoon until you are using ⅓ cup of sugar instead of a ½ cup. That's a savings of 120 calories. For a recipe using 2 cups of sugar, you just reduced the calorie count by 480 calories or 40 calories per serving. Add extra vanilla or spices for more flavor. Grated carrots, bananas and other pureed fruits also add sweetness to recipes, along with vitamins and minerals.



Tips and Tricks for Other Desserts

1. When you bake a fruit pie, make it deep dish. Use lots of fruit and only one crust on the top. This will save 90 calories per slice if cut in eight pieces.
2. Make crust-less pumpkin pie. Omitting the crust saves 90 calories. It doesn't take as long to bake either.
3. Use mini chocolate chips instead of regular chocolate chips. You can use less and still get that wonderful chocolate flavor.
4. When frosting a cake use a thin layer of icing (2 tablespoons of canned frosting is 140 calories). Other alternatives are Greek yogurt, a dusting of confectioners' sugar or a light drizzle of confectioners' sugar mixed with milk.
5. When eating out, share dessert with a friend.

Portion Control Made Easier

Have you ever opened a bag of cookies intent on eating just a couple and realized 15 minutes later that you ate the whole package? Do you ever take a second serving even though you aren't really hungry?

Dr. Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, has researched food eating patterns. His research demonstrated that appearance has more to do with how much we will eat than whether we feel full or not.

Activity: To demonstrate how easily our eyes and brain can be tricked, have members look at the optical illusion on their member's sheet. Have the group share other examples of optical illusions they have experienced.

Here are some easy ways to trick our eyes and eat less.

1. Use smaller plates and bowls. A small piece of cake or pie looks small on the usual size

plate but on a small plate it will look normal. A ½ cup of ice cream looks tiny in a soup bowl but just right in a ½ cup serving bowl.

Activity: Use two different size dessert plates/bowls. (A dessert plate and a saucer work well.) Place the same size serving of dessert on each plate. Tell the group that the servings are the same and ask which serving they would prefer. Discuss how using the smaller plate can help us eat a smaller portion.

2. Reduce serving sizes by up to 20 percent (more than that and our eyes will tell our stomach it was cheated). Cut a sheet cake into 15 pieces instead of 12. Make 18 muffins from your recipe instead of 15.

   Activity: Gather several same-size dessert plates. Cut a dessert in different sizes and demonstrate how the pieces look on the plate. An alternative is to make muffins of different sizes.

3. It takes 20 minutes for our brain to realize that our stomach is full. Pay attention as you eat and stop when you are beginning to feel full. It really doesn't help starving children if you finish your plate, but it can lead to weight gain.
4. Limit pre-packaged cookies and treats to a single serving and store those packages in the cabinet. Serve your dessert and put any extra out of sight immediately. Research shows that if we don't see more food, our mind will decide our stomach is full.

You can have your cake and eat it too!

Resources

Wansink, B. (2006). *Mindless Eating: Why we eat more than we think.* New York: Bantam Books.

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Kinney Bielamowicz, M.C. (n.d.). Altering Recipes for Good Health. *http://fcs.tamu.edu/files/2015/02/altering-recipes-for-good-health.pdf*.

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