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# FESTIVE FOOD GOES healthy

In this season of celebrations, savour your favourite *thali* and raise a toast to good health with your family

■ BY SONAL SRIVASTAVA

CAN'T STAY AWAY from festive delicacies? Follow these three simple festive fundas to enjoy the delicacies and stay in the pink of health.

■ **Festive Funda No 1.** Eat lots of fruits and vegetables through the season. They will help you glide through it with ease.

■ **Festive Funda No 2.** Portion control and moderation are key to good health and a sure-shot way to stave off weight gain.

■ **Festive Funda No 3.** Make smart swaps (you won't even notice): opt for skimmed milk instead of the full-cream version, canola or olive oil instead of hydrogenated vegetable oil, fat-free cream instead of the regular variety. You can also reduce the sugar and fat content in a recipe by one-quarter, without affecting the taste or texture of your creation.

Have a happy and healthy festival season this year!

**Nutrition Experts:** Naini Setalvad, Dr Sonia Kakar, Ritika Samaddar, chief dietician, Max Healthcare. **Food Consultants:** Prima Kurien, Veena Katiyal

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## NAVRATRA THALI

**This thali**, typically, includes deep fried kootu/fresh water chestnut flour, puri, pumpkin sabzi, fried kootu *pakoras* stuffed with potatoes, *paneer ki sabzi*, shredded radish/carrot or fruit salad, sago *khichdi* and *kheer*. With moderate portions and a little bit of abstinence, you can wash off toxins, lose weight and get glowing skin.

### Pumpkin sabzi

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Fenugreek seeds, turmeric, mustard seeds, asafoetida, lemon juice, sugar, salt and pepper, pure ghee

**SUBTRACT:** Sugar and ghee; avoid deep-frying

**ADD:** Stevia and canola/mustard oil/groundnut oil. Try shallow frying or sautéing

cheese, almonds, canola/mustard oil/groundnut oil

### Khatte aloo

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Potatoes, curd, tomatoes, salt, mustard seeds, fennel, curry leaves, ghee

**SUBTRACT:** Full-cream curd, regular potato, ghee

**ADD:** Probiotic or skimmed milk curd, sweet potato

### Cottage cheese (paneer) sabzi

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Cottage cheese, cashew nuts, milk, salt and pepper, cloves, ghee

**SUBTRACT:** Full-cream milk, salt, cashew nuts, ghee

**ADD:** Skimmed milk, low-fat cottage

### Kheer

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Milk, short grain rice (vrat ka chawal), sugar, cardamom

**SUBTRACT:** Milk, sugar

**ADD:** Soya milk, stevia, almonds pistachios

### The Good

**PUMPKIN** is an excellent source of vitamins A and E; it is also rich in copper, manganese, potassium, riboflavin and Vitamin C.

**COTTAGE CHEESE (PANEER)** is rich in calcium, selenium and riboflavin.

**FRUIT SALAD** is rich in fibre and Vitamin C. Fruits also contain various phytochemicals that help us fight diseases.

### The Bad

**KOOTU PURIS** Try amaranth or ramdana/rajgira rotis—it's an excellent source of calcium and rich in iron, magnesium and folate.

**POTATO CHIPS/PAKODAS** Drop them, snack on nuts instead. 50 grams of nuts including walnuts and almonds amount to 250 calories, a bowl of potato chips is 500 calories.

**FRIED ALOO SABZI** Go for a green veggie dish instead. Chlorophyll, present in green plants, has anti-cancer and detoxifying properties. Green vegetables are high in lutein, which is being studied for its anti-oxidant properties. Green leafy veggies are also high in carotenoids, vitamins and minerals that reduce inflammation.

### The Ugly

All deep-fried, fattening and overcooked food contain saturated fats. They can clog arteries and wash away nutrients from your food. The only value addition could be belly fat.

### Smarter Move

Use the Navratri season to detox, eat lots of fruits and vegetables. Drink lots of water, unsweetened lemonade or coconut water to wash toxins away.

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**TRY THIS**

**SAGO SEEKH KEBAB**

WORK TIME : 5 MINUTES + SOAKING TIME / TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES / SERVINGS: 4-5

1 c sago, soaked in water  
4 boiled potatoes  
½ tsp oil  
Pinch of mango powder  
Salt to taste  
Fresh coriander

**1. MASH** soaked sago with potatoes, add ½ tsp oil so that the mixture does not stick to your hands, add mango powder, salt and chopped coriander.  
**2. WRAP** the mix around an iron rod, give it a seekh kebab shape and grill it in a microwave.

**NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING**

144 Kcal, 3 g pro, 33 g carbs, 1 g total fat, 0 g sat fat, 3 g fibre, 0 mg chol, 8 mg sodium

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**DURGA PUJA BHOG**

**A traditional bhog** has all the goodness of fibrous green veggies and a rich taste that lingers on with sweet memories. It includes pulao, luchi and five fried veggies. The bhajas on offer are: potol, begun, aloo, karola and kumro. You will also find chchhanar dalna (cottage cheese in gravy), fulkopir dalna (cauliflower in a rich gravy), labra (a mixed vegetable medley), jalpai or khejur/pineapple chutney with raisins and payesh (kheer) for a sweet ending. Sounds too good to resist? Here's how you can enjoy the bhog and safeguard your health and waistline.

**Pulao**

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Basmati rice, cashew nuts, raisins, cardamoms, bay leaves, cumin, cloves, salt, peppercorns, ghee, saffron

**SUBTRACT:** Basmati rice and sugar

**ADD:** Low glycaemic index rice or brown rice/unpolished rice, stevia, carrots and green beans

and almonds

**SUBTRACT:** Sugar, rice, milk

**ADD:** Short grain rice/low glycaemic index rice, jaggery/stevia, soya milk or skimmed milk

**Luchi**

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Refined flour, ghee, salt and water

**SUBTRACT:** Refined flour, ghee and go easy on salt

**ADD:** Mix wholewheat flour to the refined flour, use canola oil for frying, add just a spot of ghee for the flavour

**Bhajas**

**WHAT'S IN THEM:** Brinjal, potatoes, pumpkin, bitter gourd, salt, turmeric and oil for deep-frying

**SUBTRACT:** Potatoes, deep-frying, too much salt

**ADD:** Sweet potatoes, steam and sauté/grill/microwave, herbs for seasoning

**Chchhanar Dalna**

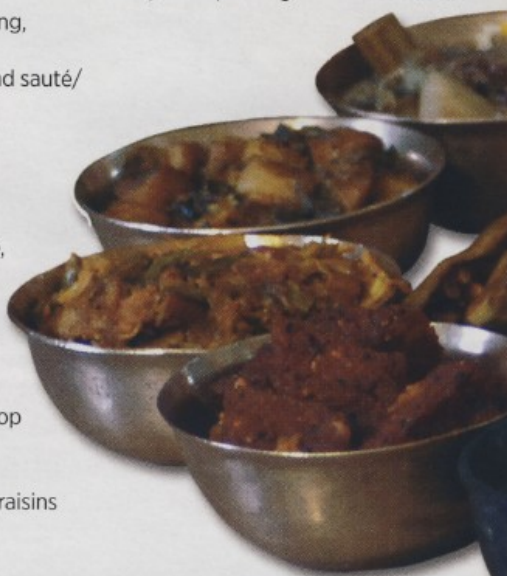
**WHAT'S IN IT:** Cottage cheese, potatoes, mustard oil and ghee, grated ginger, garam masala, turmeric, chillies and curd

**SUBTRACT:** Too much salt, ghee, potatoes

**ADD:** Toned-milk products, powdered flaxseeds from the top

**Payesh**

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Rice, sugar, milk, raisins



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### The Good

**BRINJAL** Indigo- and violet-coloured foods contain anti-oxidant compounds. Dark blue and indigo foods reduce 'oxidative stress', one of the main factors that cause ageing. It's also a good source of manganese.

**MUSTARD OIL** is packed with monounsaturated fatty acids or MUFAs.

**SPICES** New research from the University of Georgia finds that anti-oxidant-rich herbs and spices such as clove can block the formation of harmful compounds that are associated with ageing and may check tissue damage caused by high levels of blood sugar.

**TURMERIC** eases inflammation, protects the liver, combats heart disease and wards off ulcers.

### The Bad

**LUCHI** Avoid deep-fried luchi and have missi roti, you can add a variety of low glycaemic index flour in your missi roti dough.

**DEEP-FRYING OR OVER COOKING** can lead to oxidation, acidity and weight gain.

**SUGAR** causes weight gain and can send your blood sugar into the danger (diabetic) zone.

### The Ugly

Go easy on table salt; high sodium intake can lead to water retention, affecting your kidneys and raising your blood pressure.

### Smarter Move

Have a glass of nimbu pani or coconut water after the heavy meal to wash away the grease.

### TRY THIS

#### LABRA (MIXED VEGETABLE MEDLEY)

WORK TIME : 15 MINUTES / TOTAL TIME: 35 MINUTES / SERVINGS: 4-5

1 Tbsp mustard oil	seeds)
150 g beans	1/2 shell grated coconut (optional)
150 g radish	Bay leaves
150 g pumpkin	1 tsp turmeric powder
150 g potatoes	1/2 tsp bhaja masala (roast cumin & fennel in equal measure in a non-stick pan & grind to a powder)
150 g banana pith	Salt to taste
150 g potol (pointed gourd or parwal)	Stevia
2 tsp 5 phoron (fennel, nigella or <i>kalonji</i> , cumin, mustard and fenugreek	

1. **COARSELY** chop all vegetables, heat oil in a pan, add paanch phoron and bay leaves. Add veggies, salt, stevia, turmeric powder, chopped green chillies and very little water and steam until done. Add bhaja masala and grated coconut and cook for a few minutes. Serve hot.

#### NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING

159 Kcal, 3 g pro, 14 g carbs, 11 g total fat, 5 g sat fat, 4 g fibre, 0 mg chol, 19 mg sodium

Recipe by **Devika Bhattacharya**, homemaker



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## EID KI DAWAT

**Piping hot biryanis** and smoked kebabs can weaken the resolve of the staunchest of calorie-conscious people. Don't worry if you find it difficult to resist the aromas wafting from the hot kebabs or the sight of skewers laden with spicy seekh. With a little caution, you can indulge and keep the inches from piling on your waist.

### Biryani

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Ghee, basmati rice, cumin, cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, bay leaves, coriander and mint leaves, garam masala, ginger, onions, garlic, saffron, mutton

**SUBTRACT:** Ghee and red meat

**ADD:** Low glycaemic index rice/brown rice, canola oil/mustard rice, chicken or oily fish for healthy Omega-3 fats

### Kebabs

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Mince meat, onions, garlic, ginger, green chilli (de-seeded), fresh coriander, cardamoms (small, green, ground), chilli powder, salt, garam masala, cumin seeds (whole), coriander powder, oil

**SUBTRACT:** Fat-laden mince meat, over cooking/grilling on high temperature

**ADD:** Serve green veggies such as lettuce or cabbage with kebabs for a kick

of fibre. You can also use soya granules or minced tofu, it may not measure up to minced meat, but will certainly protect your health. Tofu is an excellent source of calcium and is rich in magnesium, selenium and folate too

### Seviyan

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Vermicelli, milk, sugar, raisins, almonds, cardamom, pistachios, ghee

**SUBTRACT:** Refined and processed foods, full-cream milk

**ADD:** Wholewheat vermicelli, honey/stevia and toned milk. Sprinkle crushed walnuts. In an Australian study with 35 adults with type 2 diabetes; 19 added Omega-3 fats on their own; the other 16 ate 28 grams of walnuts (14 halves). The walnut eaters met their Omega-3 targets, while those who chose their own Omega-3s ate mostly saturated fats

### The Good

**CINNAMON** Research has shown that it helps control blood sugar in people with type 2 diabetes. It also has anti-oxidant and antimicrobial properties, not to mention a wonderful flavour that can be a smart swap for sugar.

**GARLIC** This potent onion relative contains the active ingredient allicin, which fights infection and bacteria. British researchers gave 146 people either a placebo or a garlic extract for 12 weeks; the garlic takers were two-thirds less likely to catch a cold. Other studies suggest that garlic lovers who chew more than six cloves a week have a 30% lower rate of colorectal cancer and a 50% lower rate of stomach cancer.

### The Bad

**RED MEAT** may please your taste buds, but it can damage your heart and your cardiologist will certainly not approve of it. So opt for lean meats and fish wherever possible.

### The Ugly

Over cooking/grilling meats, poultry, fish that are char-grilled (with dripping fat) may have carcinogenic heterocyclic amines (HCAs) compounds that are linked to cancers.

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**TRY THIS**

**GILAUTI KEBABS**

WORK TIME : 1/2 HOUR / TOTAL TIME: 1 1/2 HOUR / SERVINGS: 6

- 1/2 kg minced meat
- 150 g onions, finely cut and browned in oil
- 1 tsp garlic paste
- 1/2 tsp red chilli powder
- 150 g roasted chana powder
- 1 Tbsp garam masala (powdered cumin, clove, cardamom, black pepper, and cinnamon, all in equal quantity)
- Salt to taste
- 2 tsp poppy seeds
- 10 drops of freshly-plucked papaya juice or 1" thick piece of raw papaya with skin

**NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING**

267 Kcal, 28 g pro, 17 g carbs, 9 g total fat, 1 g sat fat, 3 g fibre, 63 mg chol, 89 mg sodium

Recipe by **Sakina Yusuf Khan**, health writer

- 1. MINCE** meat and add fried onions, ginger garlic paste, poppy seeds and put it through a mincer and make a fine paste. Add roasted chana powder, garam masala and raw papaya, and put it aside for an hour. (The mince is usually smoked with a flaming charcoal, we don't recommend it for health reasons.)
- 2. MAKE** small round patties, grease a non-stick pan with canola oil and cook patties on a slow fire until done.

*When buying mincemeat, make sure you get lean cuts and ask the vendor to scrape off fat from the meat pieces before mincing.*



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## ONAM SPREAD

**A typical Onam spread** is as enticing as the Kerala backwaters. The irresistible thali includes sambhar, pappadam, thoran, chutney, pickle, avial, erissery, uperi, rice, rasam, payasam, banana chips and samandhi podi. Make your favourite foods virtuous and indulge guilt-free.

### Erissery

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Split red gram, pumpkin, coconut, dry red chillies, cumin, garlic, refined oil, mustard seeds, curry leaves, button onions

**SUBTRACT:** Refined oil and go easy on the coconut as it has a high saturated fat content

**ADD:** Multigrains to load up on vital nutrients, grated pumpkins and crushed walnuts. Substitute grated coconut with reduced-fat coconut milk

### Uperi

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Black-eyed beans, 1 raw banana, cumin, green chillies, turmeric powder, garlic, mustard seeds, dry red chillies, grated coconut and button onions, curry leaves

**SUBTRACT:** Use half the banana and grated coconut

**ADD:** Include more beans in the preparation and add drumsticks. Opt for reduced-fat coconut milk instead of shredded coconut

### Coconut Chutney

**WHAT'S IN IT:** Coconut, ginger, onions, curry leaves, dry red chillies, mustard seeds, tamarind

**SUBTRACT:** Use only a small amount of coconut

**ADD:** Sprinkle flaxseed on the chutney to increase the quantity of heart-protecting Omega-3



### The Good

**FIBRE-RICH VEGETABLES** Fibre helps prevent rectal cancer, according to a University of Utah study of 2,000 people. Researchers found that soluble fibre in fruits and vegetables removes tumour-promoting chemicals and creates compounds that can stop cancer cell growth.

**TAMARIND** is also used as an Ayurvedic medicine for digestive problems.

### The Bad

**FRIED BANANA CHIPS** are a calorie-watcher's nightmare. If you must have them, then opt for jaggery-coated banana chips, they are rich in iron, only 5-6 pieces are enough to fill you up. Try the sun-dried banana chips; the moisture in them is evaporated under the sun.

**COCONUT OIL** has high saturated fat content. Opt for MUFA-rich canola oil, it's light on your stomach and is friendly to your heart.

### The Ugly

Carb-heavy foods such as polished rice should be kept off your plate, as they are without much nutritive value.

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**TRY THIS**

**AVIAL**

WORK TIME : 10 MINUTES / TOTAL TIME: 20 MINUTES / SERVINGS: 4-6

500 g drumsticks  
500 g carrots  
500 g raw bananas  
Pinch of cumin  
3 garlic cloves  
1 c grated coconut  
1 1/2 Tbsp yogurt  
1/2 tsp red chilli powder  
1/2 tsp turmeric  
8 green chillies, slit into half  
1/4 c sliced raw mango  
1 onion, cut into 8 pieces  
2 sprigs curry leaves  
2 Tbsp canola oil

**1. GRIND** the cumin seeds, garlic and coconut together to a smooth paste. Mix the paste with yogurt and keep aside.

**2. HEAT** 1 cup water in a pan; add red chilli powder and turmeric powder. Bring to a boil; add vegetables (putting those that need longer to cook first). When vegetables are almost done, add green chillies, mango and onion; mix well. Add salt to taste.

**3. MIX** in the yogurt mixture. Lower heat and simmer for 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and mix in the curry leaves and oil.

**NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING**

149 Kcal, 2 g pro, 15 g carbs, 10 g total fat, 4 g sat fat, 4 g fibre, 0 mg chol, 34 mg sodium

Recipe by Prima Kuriem, food consultant. This recipe is from her book *Kerala Kitchen*, published by Roli Books.