

How to survive the summer social events and not blow your diet.



People are faced with social events all the time; not just during summer. It's just that during summer most of the events focus on picnic food and most picnic foods can be disastrous to your dieting success. I have several strategies for party participation that don't involve you feeling like you have to suffer or turn down the invitation. Socializing has to fit into your diet protocol too.

Show up Early. Show up Late.

If you are a dieter that feels you have very low self-control, you have two options that will help you avoid temptation.

The first is to show up early at the party. Parties take time to warm up. If you show up early and the host starts bringing out too many things that will make you feel like you are suffering or you'll feel tempted to gorge on the guacamole you can bow out and leave earlier than you might have otherwise— and not feel guilty. You will have stayed long enough to be polite. You don't have to stay until dessert is finished and

the candles are burned out. There are other strategic reasons to show up early too, and I will get to those.

Showing up late is another strategy. If you come after the main course has been served you can mingle with guests and no one will notice you didn't eat the meal. Be polite though. Tell your host you will be arriving late so they don't buy food for you or worry because you are not there yet. The most extreme version of this strategy that I employed was one year at Thanksgiving. I told my mother I would be late, but I hadn't told her yet that I was beginning a VERY restrictive diet. A liquids-only diet. I had decided to do the same liquid diet that many of you will remember Oprah was involved in. Turns out Oprah and I were on the same diet at the same time. She lost 67 pounds and dragged a wagon full of fat on stage. I lost 52 pounds that go-round. Because I was doing that liquid diet and it was early in the process, I was too scared to tell anyone (except my husband) that I was on it, so we showed up for the dinner about the time my mother was carving the last bits off the turkey carcass and putting away leftovers. My husband grabbed a plate and piled it with his Thanksgiving dinner. I just stood in the kitchen socializing. Even my mother never noticed I didn't eat. Worked great.

Dealing with drinking on a diet is another conundrum. I show up early for parties and make my drink before anyone will notice I'm not drinking alcohol. I grab a rocks glass, fill it with ice water and garnish it with lemon. Most folks think I'm drinking vodka and they don't ask questions. I have found that if you drink alcohol while on a serious diet (even wine) you will lose about 60% less weight than you would if you don't drink. So knowing 60% is a lot less weight to lose will give you the strength to abstain.

If you don't show up early for the party, just try to make your

drink while no one is really watching. They don't care *that* much. You just think they do. I have had a lot of experiences where people told me they felt uncomfortable that I was not drinking. When that comment doesn't immediately get me to fall apart and cheat, they back off and leave me with my sparkling water. You don't have to catch their guilt ball. Just let it fly by.

One way to know you'll have things you can eat at the party is to bring your own. I have gone to many parties or business meetings with my own food. When it's time to eat I just get out my little package, open it and begin to eat. Just make it something that smells good, looks good and tastes good. Especially at meetings, you'd be surprised how many people look at what I am eating and are jealous. They wish they could eat my dish instead of the lousy sandwich buffet they were offered at the meeting. Then they want to know what diet I'm on and how they can get involved. They are proud that you show so much discipline. That garners respect.

At picnics I bring something I know I can eat. I set that on the buffet table and make sure I get in line to eat in time to get some of my own food. I am brash enough that I might even make a cold entrée or a substantial appetizer. That way when I eat it I know I won't go hungry, and most times I can eat least find a veggie tray that someone else brought and I can have some of that too. Also a good strategy to bring a beautiful bowl of strawberries. Voila! Dessert for me!

So what can you do if you have a relative or friend who tries to push food on you that's not allowed on your diet? Do what I do. Tell them you are "temporarily allergic" to that food. Most folks don't hear the word "temporary" but they respect the word "allergic" and quit bugging you. If they know darn well you are not allergic they find that phrase clever and funny. That starts

up a conversation. It's okay to be on a diet and be proud of the fact that you are taking the initiative to take care of your health. This behavior also bolsters the commitment you have in your dieting quest. The more public you are about the process, the more likely you will stick to it.

I'll admit that on some occasions, I have cancelled my calendar in order to sequester myself and be on my diet. I have not found that to be a solid strategy. I'd say that's fine for the first weekend. Sometimes it's just good to go to a movie and drink mineral water that first weekend. Those are the hardest first days of a diet. There really is no reason to keep up this behavior. You don't have to be a mole and go underground. If you get out after losing some weight people will begin to compliment you and you'll feel better about yourself. That strategy will give you extra confidence to see yourself through all the way to your new weight goal.

P.S. One last strategy for picnic dieting success? Throw the party yourself. That way you'll have control over the whole menu and you can serve things like this!

Here are two, new, picnic-perfect burger recipes you can make for your next party.

Green Chili Burgers

Godzilla Burgers

Enjoy!

Cheers,