

~~ The Reasonable (December) Diet ~~

REASONABLE PARTY STRATEGY

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I hope you have taken time to at least read through the “December 3-Step.” If so, you’ll have thought about your December priorities.

Do you have a party or get-together this week? Is it a gathering you’ve looked forward to or one you wouldn’t mind skipping? Will it put you face-to-face with any of your must-have foods? Will it put you in contact with someone with whom you have a much-loved tradition?

Having thought about your overall priorities for December and your priorities as they relate to your schedule this week will help you develop a successful party strategy.

Developing a strategy is not to say that you can’t enjoy yourself. It is just a way to stay conscious of your food choices so you don’t have to wake up with feelings of remorse or regret.

Most likely the party will involve many moments-of-choice. You are not going to want to say YES to all of them. Developing a strategy is not punishment. Have fun with it. Pick and choose from one of the following strategies or creatively (and reasonably) make up your own!

Strategy: Reasonably Walking the Line

Who: Those who want or need to follow a fairly strict plan. Those determined to lose weight in December. Those who will encounter so much holiday activity that they need to use a more stringent strategy for certain lower priority parties.

Tip: Don’t assume there will be any low-calorie food available. Portion control will be paramount. Don’t go hungry. Have a bowl of vegetable soup before leaving home.

Action: If you feel comfortable, call the host and ask what is being served. If appropriate, offer to bring a dish that fits your needs.

Attitude Adjustment: Your diet is a top priority to you for a reason. Is the reason your health, a personal goal, a self-esteem issue or all of the above? Don't feel bad or apologize to anyone (including yourself). If someone asks why you aren't having the chocolate cheesecake or why you brought a tray of veggies, simply state that you are on a "special diet" or a "doctor-ordered diet."

Strategy: Reasonably Paring It Down

Who: Those who may not need to plan exactly what they are going to eat, but want to keep a measure of control.

Tip: Situate yourself away from the food.

Action: Eat only from a plate and only while you are seated.

Attitude Adjustment: Forget contemplating the level of scrumptious-ness as an indicator of what to have. It's not likely you'll run into too much that isn't pretty tasty. Instead of asking "How will it taste?" ask yourself, "How will eating this make me feel?" Consider the immediate consequence, how you will sleep later and how you will physically feel tomorrow. Also consider how you will feel about yourself. Remind yourself that it is empowering to wake up with a feeling of accomplishment (and no sugar, caffeine or wine hangover)! It's also empowering to be able to step on the scale without dread.

Preparation: As you get ready for the party, take one minute to visualize the perfect outcome: You – looking smashing, being the life of the party, smiling and engaging with people; You – leaving the party feeling light and lively; You – stepping off the scale with a another smile on your face.

Strategy: Reasonably Living It Up

Who: For those who've said (or thought), "I'm not dieting in December. I'll get back to it in January."

Tip: Decide to leave one bite on your plate. This is not magic, but any strategy will help you be more conscious of your food choices throughout the meal or event. Decide whether you are going to indulge in salty-crunchy snacks, beverages, breads, appetizers, the main course

or dessert. Consider if it might be better to avoid the type of food that is particularly challenging for you to manage reasonably.

Action: Choose a person on whom to focus. Perhaps you could decide to really get to know your sister-in-law. Or choose a (non-food) theme about which to converse. For instance, choose a topic like “charity” and then have various questions you ask each guest: where they have volunteered, where they would like to volunteer if they could; if their parents were volunteers, etc.

Attitude Adjustment: Remind yourself that food is great, but in the wise words of Julia Child, “Life itself is the proper binge.” Decide how you can binge on something besides food. It is much easier to stay on an even keel than it is to spiral down and then have to wind your way back up to sane eating.

Preparation: Memorize one of the following mantras to repeat to yourself before you make any food or beverage choice:
Indulgence does not mean over-indulgence
I am a reasonable eater
My choices reflect my intentions.

Finally – Don’t forget to have a beverage strategy.

Calories in drinks really add up, and liquor can also have the “double-trouble” effect of making you lose your resolve regarding food.

- ½ cup sparkling grape juice (80 calories)
- ½ cup wine (90 calories)
- 12-ounce bottle light beer (110 calories)
- 12-ounce regular beer (140 calories)
- 1 shot of 80-proof liquor (100 calories)
- ½ cup champagne (85 calories)