

The Lighter Side of Holiday Eating

by the American Institute of Cancer Research

When a brick-shaped package arrives in the December mail from Aunt Sadie, you may react with a heavy heart. That's because her annual fruitcake is possibly one of the most energy-dense foods in creation.

What do we mean by "energy-dense"? It's a real nutrition term. Just substitute the word "calorie" for "energy" and things become clearer. Foods that are energy dense are high in caloric ingredients – namely, fat and sugar. They also tend to be low in healthy dietary fiber.

To prevent diseases like cancer, the panel of 21 scientists who authored the AICR/WCRF Expert Report *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective* advise against eating energy-dense foods. These foods can lead to overweight and weight gain which, in turn, promote cancer risk.

One of the 10 Recommendations for Cancer Prevention they developed from reviewing more than 7,000 studies is: "Limit consumption of energy-dense foods (particularly processed foods high in added sugar, or low in fiber, or high in fat)."

Old-fashioned fruitcake is a prime example of an energy-dense food. For one thing, the fruit it contains has been dried and candied, removing all of the water and leaving concentrated amounts of sugar. Dried fruit isn't off-limits in a healthy diet, but it should be eaten in small amounts. The same goes for nuts, which do contain healthy fats but remember that those fats come in concentrated amounts which provide plenty of calories in just a handful. Then there's the extraordinarily large amount of sugar and fat in the batter.

When a cake like the one below uses whole fruits, it is lower in energy density. Whole fruits have a high water content (no calories there). They also have a high fiber content.

Try this holiday cake, which uses whole fruit and has practically no fat. It is so delicious, no one will even notice the fruitcake that's holding the door open.

Chocolate Mint Angel Food Cake with Raspberry Sauce

The sauce for this recipe may be sweetened with a sugar substitute if you desire to cut the calories even lower.

Cake:

¾ cup cake flour

½ cup cocoa powder

1 ½ cups sugar, divided

12 egg whites

1 ½ tsp. cream of tartar

¼ tsp. salt
1 ½ tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. peppermint extract

Sauce:

1 package (10 oz.) frozen raspberries, thawed and drained (juice reserved)
Water
¼ cup sugar
2 Tbsp. cornstarch

Preheat oven to 375. Sift flour, cocoa and ¾ cup sugar twice and set aside. Beat egg whites with cream of tartar, salt, vanilla and peppermint until stiff enough to form soft peaks but still moist and glossy. Add remaining ¾ cup sugar, two tablespoons at a time, continuing to beat until egg whites hold stiff peaks. Sift about ¼ of flour mixture over egg whites and fold in. Repeat, folding in remaining flour by fourths. Bake in ungreased 2-piece 10-inch tube pan for 35-40 minutes or until done. Invert cake in pan over a wine bottle or long stem soda bottle and cool.

For sauce, add enough water to reserved raspberry juice to measure 1 ¼ cups. Mix sugar and cornstarch in one quart saucepan. Stir in juice and raspberries. Heat to boiling over medium heat. Boil and stir for 1 minute. Cool. Serve with angel food cake. Makes 12 servings. **Per serving:** 160 calories, <1 g total fat (0 g saturated fat), 38 g carbohydrates, 5 g protein, 2 g dietary fiber, 105 mg sodium.

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