



## Eating Competence in Action: Season's Eatings

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, and ESI faculty member

"The most wonderful time of the year" may be particularly challenging for your clients when it comes to food temptations. To give in and eat in a no-holds-barred manner; or to abstain and miss out on luscious food. Both options leave them feeling badly.

You're helping them with eating gladly! Through your *How to Eat*\* work, their perspective about food and eating is changing incrementally and surely. The seasonal foods of the holidays offer no shortage of opportunities to practice their newly acquired skills; to learn about themselves; and to discover their food preferences, their ability to wait for the foods they truly want to enjoy, and their strong internal drives to regulate even the most delectable foods.

The following article is for you to share this holiday season. If you want, you can change the introductory paragraph to introduce yourself and/or the topic of eating competence in the midst of plenty. Please include the Ellyn Satter Institute copyright.

*\*How to Eat* is the intervention method taught to practitioners in the ESI workshop *Treating the Dieting Casualty*. The next workshop begins in February 2025. [Click here to register.](#)

### Season's Eatings

Does your holiday season bring constant and often losing battles with food temptation? If you get caught in this struggle, you are likely to feel bad whether you give in and eat; or restrict and miss out on luscious food. It need not be so. Learn to trust that you will get enough of even delicious food.

### Holidays let us celebrate good food

The holidays bring visions of tables full of food: Tasty and delicious, warm and savory, bountiful and rich, sweet and so appealing! Cooks and chefs pull out all the stops to make the most wonderfully scrumptious food. With all of these warm-fuzzy adjectives, why is anyone worried or concerned about holiday eating? Are you afraid you will eat more when food is plentiful and delicious? Learn to trust and work with your hunger and appetite rather than fighting against them.

### Trusting your internal regulators will save the day

- Begin by giving yourself permission to eat any and all foods. As you may know by now, this takes trust. Perseverance in giving permission holds real truths when it comes to your relationship with food and your body.



- Try your best to be hungry when you start the meal. This is hard to do when you spend extra time in the kitchen taste-testing and when there are lots of foods sitting around. If it is possible to avoid eating until mealtime, do it. When you begin eating when you're hungry, it is easier to tell when you are satisfied.
- Pay attention to your appetite. It will tell you clearly which foods you want to eat and which you don't. Feeling satisfied is most apparent when eating foods you enjoy.
- Structure helps. This is without a doubt where the holiday style of eating derails many folks. Try to maintain your usual predictable schedule of meals and snacks.
- Set things up so you can pay attention to your delicious food. Rather than eating here and there, make a plate. Put on it the items you most want to eat, then eat the first bites while noticing the taste, flavor, texture, what you like, what you don't like.
- Reassure yourself that there is plenty to eat. There is no need to eat more than you want now because there will be more tasty food when it's time to eat again.
- Don't criticize yourself for eating more than usual or for getting too full. You can let it be knowing that your body will regulate naturally by using more energy and by requiring less food on subsequent days.

### **Have delicious food all year long**

Becoming a competent eater will let you eat and enjoy delicious food on special occasions and any other day of the year as well. Foods that are no longer forbidden become ordinary foods that can be consumed in ordinary ways. Large portion sizes become less appealing in the context of regular and reliable meals and snacks. Allow yourself plenty of food that appeals to your senses.













































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































