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How to Say "No Thanks" at the Holidays

by Dawn Klingensmith

(PhiladelphiaInquirer) If ever there were a test of willpower, it's the holiday season. As if a table laden with turkey, mashed potatoes and fresh-baked biscuits weren't temptation enough, a well-meaning auntie tries to push second helpings of dessert on her relatives - some of whom are watching their weight, treating high blood pressure or simply practicing moderation. Co-workers trying to lose weight themselves redistribute calories by bringing cookies and fruitcake to the office.



These offerings aren't always selfless. Maybe Aunt Margie is jealous of her niece's recent weight loss. Or perhaps her self-esteem is wrapped up in the popularity of her pumpkin pie.

There are polite ways of getting Aunt Margie to shut her pie hole, so to speak. Start by giving her the benefit of the doubt.

"The keys to successfully thwarting food coercion are to acknowledge the giver's benevolent effort, express your gratitude, and sweetly decline the offer with confidence and cheerful persistence," says nutrition consultant and exercise physiologist Tiffany Crate, TLC Fitness, Chicago.

Crate describes some hypothetical food frenzies folks might encounter, as well as friendly but firm ways to resist.

#1: Grandma says, "Have another piece of pie! It's your favorite, and I baked it just for you."

You say, "You're so good to me, and it is my favorite. I certainly will have another piece - to take home and enjoy tomorrow."

#2: Mom says, "That sounds like quite the ordeal you had at the airport! You look exhausted. Let me make you a plate of food."

You say, "You know me so well! I am exhausted, so I'm going straight to bed."

#3: A husband honors holiday tradition - by giving his wife yet another box of chocolates.

You say, "I am so lucky to have such a sweet husband. But too much chocolate doesn't sit well on my stomach, so I'm going to save these three pieces for myself and offer the rest to our house guests."

#4: Dad says, "We have so many leftovers. Here, eat some more."

You say, "Actually, I feel pleasantly full as it is. But I assure you the food won't go to waste. I'll wrap some up to take home with me, and perhaps we can freeze some for later."

#5: Co-workers say, "Take a brownie! It's the holidays, after all!"

You say, "Yes, but didn't I tell you I'm in training for the Winter Olympics?"