



Eat This, Not That: St. Patrick's Day

Enjoy the holiday responsibly, from the top of the morning til night

By Erin Brereton



You may be tempted to indulge in Irish cuisine on St. Patrick's Day—but healthy choices aren't always easy to find.

Traditional dishes like corned beef and cabbage and hearty breakfasts served with pork sausage are often packed with sodium, fat and starch. Meals are sometimes also paired with strong, alcohol-laden drinks such as whiskey or beer.

However, with a few substitutions, you can sample some of Ireland's most authentic fare—and still stay on a nutritious eating plan.

Eat This, Not That

Eat this: Lean on the green theme and create meals with avocado, fresh herbs, cucumber and kale. You could start the day with an avocado and banana smoothie, for example, or baked eggs with avocado and arugula. Lunch could be falafel with an avocado tahini, or baked chicken with pesto. Try snacking on kiwi, mint chocolate chip frozen yogurt and pistachios.

Not that: Avoid heavily processed foods with green food coloring.

Eat this: Potatoes are rich in potassium and vitamin C; baking, broiling or steaming spuds will help bring out their natural flavors, according to Karen Sudders MS, RD, LDN, clinical nutrition and culinary manager at Cancer Treatment Centers of America's Eastern Regional Medical Center in Philadelphia. Sweet potatoes or yams can be another positive choice. "Sweet potatoes are naturally high in fiber, as well as vitamin A and vitamin C," she says.

Not that: Try to avoid meals loaded with white bread, white potatoes and butter.

Eat this: Cabbage, which is loaded with fiber and other nutrients, is a cruciferous vegetable—greater consumption of that type of produce is linked to a lower risk of some cancers. The ideal preparation involves steaming the vegetables for three to four minutes until crisp. Avoid overcooking them; it destroys the beneficial enzymes involved in the body's natural detoxification system.

Not that: Corned beef. Or at least limit your portion size to no more than the size of a deck of cards. The American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Health Organization both identify processed meats as being unhealthy, according to Sudders, "The recommendation is to limit or eliminate [corned beef, ham, sausage and other processed meats] completely from your diet," she says.

Drink This, Not That

Drink this: Tea, in moderation. "Traditional Irish tea is a great addition to any Irish celebration and can fit in most dietary guidelines for patients," Sudders says. "[But] be mindful of the amount of caffeine consumed and the additions to your tea, such as milk, honey or sugar."

Not that: Skip the whiskey, stout beer or other alcoholic beverages that are often a part of St. Patrick's Day—they may interact with some of the medication you're taking.

If you're considering imbibing something stronger than Irish tea on the holiday, Sudders recommends discussing it with your doctor ahead of time and drinking plenty of water to stay hydrated.

If you're worried the temptation of rich food and green beer will prove too strong, you can always opt to celebrate Irish culture by doing something nonfood related, such as attending a St. Patrick's Day parade.

"Listen to some traditional Irish music, either live or a recording," Sudders says. "Attend an Irish dance performance. All of these are great ways to celebrate without food or drink involved."

And if you do end up going a bit overboard on eating, try to return to your routine as soon as you can.

"If [patients] are only consuming these foods on one day, the effects to the body long-term would be minimal," Sudders says. "With St Patrick's Day, as well as any other holiday, the most important thing to remember is, it's a day. At the end of the day, it is always just about moderation and balance."

SHARE



COMMENTS

RELATED ITEMS

No Related Items