

# Kick unhealthy game day snacks

Don't skip meals, and defend yourself against blitz of high-fat foods.

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Sunday is not only a big game day.

For those of us gathering in living rooms here in Atlanta – or Denver, Seattle and everywhere in between – it's also a big eating day.

In fact, the Super Bowl is the nation's second largest day for food consumption, next to Thanksgiving Day, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That's gobs of loaded nachos, spicy meatballs and, of course, the staple food of the Super Bowl, chicken wings. Get this: 1.25 billion wings will be devoured during Super Bowl XLVIII, matching the record level of 2012 and about 20 million more wings than consumed during last year's match.

Many Super Bowl menus are not only high in fat and calories but also a recipe for indigestion and, if not careful, food-borne illness.

But Sunday doesn't have to be centered on the TV and an endless snack buffet. By putting together a game plan that includes getting off that couch to move during the day and swapping out processed foods for raw vegetables, you can enjoy the football festivities without overdoing it, according to experts.

Keith Kantor, a Norcross nutritionist and author of the new book "The Green Box League of Nutritious Justice" (Effective Press \$38.95), recommends fighting the temptation to skip meals before the game. Showing up to a party starving is "only asking for trouble," he says, and will lead to inhaling double the amount of dips and chips you'd normally consume.

Another way to balance out excess calories is by getting plenty of exercise. Avoid sitting around before the game, since you will be doing so much of that during the game, he said.

Jennifer Hill Booker, a personal chef in Atlanta and owner of the catering company "Your Resident Gourmet," likes to serve food in courses which can help keep the menu exciting (even if the battle between the Seahawks and the Broncos isn't). Bringing out food little by little also ensures food doesn't sit too long.

She likes to mix traditional Super Bowl bites with low-fat options. For example, she often begins with a hummus platter paired with a plate of hot wings, followed by fruit kabobs accompanied by queso and chips, and finished with a build-your-own-salad and side of meatballs.

"If you make sure you add vegetables and whole grains with traditional Super Bowl fare, you'll be enjoy the food, be satisfied and you won't have

the food hangover the next day," said Booker.

This year, Booker will be watching the game at a friend's house and she plans to bring a vegetable platter with homemade black-eyed peas hummus along with chips and a homemade queso concoction (made with cheese, salsa and spinach).

One of Booker's favorite munchies is homemade popcorn dishes. By adding some spices such as cayenne or brown sugar for sweetness, popcorn can be an enticing and high-fiber, vitamin-rich alternative to chips. (One of her stove-top recipes calls for up to a quarter-cup of oil, one-half to two-thirds cup of popcorn kernels; once popcorn is popped, add one to teaspoons of fresh, cracked black pepper, a third of a cup of shredded Parmesan cheese and sea salt to taste.)

Raw vegetables are always a good go-to snack if you find yourself still tempted to nosh out of boredom after finishing a meal.

Ashley Skorz, a registered dietitian at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, said there's no reason to think healthy options can't also be fun and fully satisfying. Kids and adults like choices so she plans to provide guests with lots of options such as an array of dips – such as black bean dip, hummus and a homemade Greek yogurt dip (instead of high fat ranch dip) – for dipping vegetables and whole wheat pita slices.

She's also a big fan of homemade popcorn snacks. She drizzles melted dark chocolate when she's in the mood for something sweet and opts for hot sauce when she's

craving a savory treat. For guests, she likes to serve air-popped popcorn and set up a station to let them make their own mix. She includes everything from



Local personal chef Jennifer Hill Booker. CONTRIBUTED BY LORAIN FOUSHEE

dark chocolate to raisins and nuts to hot sauces.

Sometimes, the experts say it's not really about your appetite. Sometimes, we over-eat because we

are simply tired. With that in mind, getting a good night's rest Saturday night could be the key to eating in moderation.

## TIPS FOR PREPARING, SERVING PARTY FOOD

### ■ Safe food handling:

Always wash your hands before and after handling food. Always serve food on clean plates, not those previously holding raw meat or poultry.

### ■ Cook meat thoroughly:

Beef and pork should be reach an internal temperature of 145 degrees. And poultry should reach a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees.

### ■ The two-hour rule:

Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting out and discard anything left out for two hours or more.

### ■ Keep hot foods hot,

cold foods cold: Hot foods should be held at 140 degrees or warmer (you can use chafing dishes, slow cookers or warming trays). Cold foods should be held at 40 degrees or colder (you can nest dishes in bowls of ice or use small serving bowls and replace them).

Source: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service

## TIPS FOR FUN AND HEALTHY SUPER BOWL EATING

### ■ Don't skip meals:

Since the game isn't until after dinner, serve your family breakfast, lunch and dinner so they will have filled up on healthy foods and be less tempted by snacks later.

### ■ Be active:

Let this day of sport inspire your family, anything from taking a walk around the block to walking the dog to a friendly family pick-up football game. During the game, channel that energy into dancing around when Bruno Mars and the Red Hot Chili Peppers perform at halftime. Let your kids create their own touchdown moves and do it each time a team scores.

### ■ Sack sugary beverages:

Have plenty of water on hand for the kids in place of sugary juices or sodas (even if you choose to drink them during the game). Wake up your water by adding slices of fruit.

### ■ Adults, go easy on the alcohol:

Alcohol is full of empty calories and excess alcohol can lower inhibitions and lead to over-eating.

### ■ Go easy on processed starches:

Watch the intake of chips, crackers, french fries, etc., and keep plenty of raw vegetables around for easy, healthy munching.

### ■ Get creative:

Fruit kabobs, homemade popcorn and build-your-own salads are fun and healthy options.

Source: local nutritionist Keith Kantor, personal chef Jennifer Hill Booker and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta's Strong4Life. For more recipes on jazzing up your popcorn, go to [www.strong4life.com/pages/galleryes/Popcorn](http://www.strong4life.com/pages/galleryes/Popcorn)