

Fun Fact of the Week

10 Tips to Survive Labor Day Feasts*

By PERRI O. BLUMBERG

Ah, the unofficial last weekend of summer! Here's how to enjoy it without feeling guilty when it's over.

Watching what you eat during Labor Day weekend can be like going on a Tinder date: You hope for the best, but you're bracing yourself for next-level disaster. We've got your back this year! Top diet experts told us how you can eat what you want over the holiday weekend, and still turn dietary landmines into weight-loss victories. Headed out of town on vacay? Be mindful of these [30 Worst Vacay Habits for Your Waistline](#) so that you don't have to go on a diet to fit back into your favorite work outfit!



1. Keep Your Boozing Simple



Skip the bottomless mimosa and bloodies and avoid fruity alcoholic concoctions altogether. "Instead, opt for something low in carbs and sugar. Sip simple drinks like vodka and soda water with a squirt of lime. Not only will this save you a ton of calories, but you'll also save yourself from a sugar-induced hangover," says Jayson Calton, Ph.D. and Mira Calton, CN, authors of *The Micronutrient Miracle*. Score more insights with our [20 Eat This, Not That! Tips for Drinkers](#).

2. Scope Before You Scoop

This simple trick can [slash calories](#) like crazy: Scan the buffet line strategically before you even pick up a plate. "Studies show that individuals who are overweight tend to fill their plate as they go through the line," says shares Marcey Rader, M.Ed, health and wellness expert for Extended Stay America Hotels. "Meanwhile, people at a recommended weight tend to be more strategic and take inventory, decide what they're going to eat, and then grab a plate." If you're contributing to the buffet offerings at a potluck dinner, "Be the one to bring a fruit or veggie dish to ensure you'll have a healthy choice," says Sarah-Jane Bedwell, RD, LDN, a Nashville-based nutritionist and author of *Schedule Me Skinny: Plan to Lose Weight and Keep It Off in Just 30 Minutes a Week*. She suggests sliced tomatoes with a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar with basil, a fruit salad served in a scooped-out watermelon half, or vegetable skewers to throw on the grill.



3. Focus on What You Can Control



By concentrating on what you're personally accountable for, you're setting yourself up for success. "Control the controllables," says Bob Wright, Hilton Head Health's director of education. "Have a well-balanced breakfast and maybe a [healthy snack](#) before the Labor Day buffet, which will help rein in hunger and empower you to make better food choices." And when you do indulge, consume conscientiously. "Eat treats mindfully," says Wright. "If you are going to have one, eat it slowly and savor every bite." Have no say in what Auntie May whips up for the annual Labor Day feast? Don't sweat it. "If you don't have as much control over the food choices, be sure to get a good workout in in the morning and look for ways to stay more active during the weekend," adds Wright.

4. Don't Skip Meals

It's easy to hope that if you skip a meal or two, you can treat yourself to more food later, but doing so will only result in Big Eyes Syndrome: You'll get so ravenous at the first smell and sight of food that you stack your plate high and set yourself up for weight-loss failure. "Don't skip breakfast or lunch thinking it will balance out what you'll eat at holiday festivities. You'll have low blood sugar, be really hungry and more likely to overindulge," says Varano.



5. Stop Eating "meh-style"



A philosophy worth adopting when sitting around at a BBQ or standing in the buffet line: "Don't pile things on your plate just because they are there," says Rader. "If you feel 'meh' about something, why eat it and waste the calories? Eat the things you don't normally eat, like a brat or seven-layer dip. If you eat pretzels all the time, why put it on the plate with the special holiday food? If you just think baked beans are just okay, skip 'em!" Also: Skip the stuff that clearly came from the frozen foods aisle—especially these [67 Worst Frozen Foods in America!](#)

6. Go Bunless

BBQ fare tends to be high in calories, but if you only indulge occasionally, it's okay to sink your teeth into a juicy burger or savory bratwurst. To boost your weight-loss efforts, just skip the bun or find a [burger bun alternative](#). "To save almost 200 calories, wrap the meat in a cabbage or romaine leaf," says Rader. Not sure which meat option is your best bet? "Given the choice, opt for a lean beef burger over a hot dog for less saturated fat and belly-bloating sodium," says Bedwell. "Just keep the toppings smart; veggies and a squirt of mustard or ketchup are your best bets."



7. Host Festivities at Your Own Place



If you host the party or BBQ, you'll have more control over what's being served than if you go elsewhere. You can skew the menu toward healthier, lighter options and sneak in as many [fat-burning foods](#) as you can. Better yet, make the meal a healthy potluck and challenge guests to bring the healthiest-but-tastiest recipe they can find. (For a good starting point, check out our delicious [recipes for weight loss](#)). To torch even more calories, "You can invite your most active, fitness-minded friends to celebrate the holiday with you and your family, with the caveat that you'll go for a run or to your favorite fitness class before dinner," says Stacy Schwartz, co-founder and CEO of Ketanga Fitness Retreats.

8. Eat More Than You Think You Can

It may sound counterintuitive, but if you're eating smart, you can chow down. "The key is to make sure the foods you reach for include avocado, eggs, salmon, [lean] red meat, and cantaloupe," says yoga instructor Lauren Imparato, founder and CEO of I.Am.You studio in New York City. "You need fat to burn fat." Avoid high-sodium foods that will leave you bloated, such as canned soup, soy sauce and pizza. For Imparato, a sample Labor Day weekend menu might include egg whites with spinach for breakfast, tomato soup for lunch with corn chips, and grilled salmon for dinner with sautéed spinach. She'll then allow herself beverages and desserts as desired.



DON'T MISS: [40 Dinner Ideas That Don't Need a Recipe](#)

9. Create a Healthy "Morning After" Tradition



Start your day by banking some calories. "Plan to meet your friends in the park, on a trail, or at the gym for a workout or sports game the morning after a holiday meal," says Schwartz. "This will help you wake up and start the day off on the right foot, instead of going right into leftovers." Plus, committing to join others for an activity makes you more likely to stick to your plan.

10. Get Out Your Mental Measuring Spoon

If you want to indulge in some treats, go for it—you've banked calories for that by following the tips above. Just keep portions in mind. You can use an easy trick: "I'm a big believer in my 'two-tablespoon rule,'" says Toby Amidor, MS, RD, CDN, nutrition ambassador for the American Macular Degeneration Foundation. "I recommend scouting all the foods on display and taking two tablespoons of the high-calorie, high-fat options. That way you can enjoy good conversation and good food without feeling deprived," she adds. It's similar to the 3-bite rule, which we mention in our [17 Tips to Stay Slim While Traveling](https://www.eatthis.com/diet-tips-for-holiday-weekend/)—also good info to have handy if you're on the road for the holiday weekend!



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