

## Festive Food Hacks

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## Healthy Food Guide

Don't you just love the festive season? Good cheer abounds... let's face it, there's an abundance of everything! And that's when us 'healthy types' can get wrapped up in layers of stress.

Whether we've made a decision not to eat fake food any more, trying to lose weight, have a food intolerance or we just know that MSG gives us a hangover we don't deserve, this time of communal eating can be heavily seasoned with edible minefields.

### Festive Food Hack #1 - The Festive Party Buffet

When I went gluten free ten years ago, it was difficult to explain to family and party hosts that I couldn't eat their marvellous spread of mini quiches and fancy filo-wrapped nibbles.

"At least have some chips!" they would declare, and I would feel so ungrateful when I refused unless they knew the ingredients!

Although there were times when I wished my gluten intolerance came with a cast like a broken leg does, at least I had a 'label'. It can be even more difficult when you are trying to explain to people that you simply don't WANT to eat unhealthy food. That's right, not even the food they have laid on especially for their family and friends... it's as tricky as the buffalo wings are sticky.

**So, we figure that those pre-made party nibbles are probably not health foods. But why exactly?**

- If you are trying to curb your intake of empty carbs, those plates of mini quiches, spring rolls and potato wedges will make your paleo genes want to run back to your cave! They are also a big no-no if you have any level of gluten sensitivity.
- If you are trying to avoid unhealthy fats such as seed oils and trans fats, these party bites have likely been manufactured using these, along with GMO ingredients.
- Those pre-made dips are often as sugary and additive-laden as the Christmas cookies you wouldn't consider eating. They are also often a hidden source of gluten, so beware if you're sensitive.

**So, how do you navigate the buffet table and make the healthiest choices? Here are my top tips:**

- **Decide in advance** what you want to avoid and be clear in your mind the reasons why. This mindfulness will not only give you confidence in your choices, but it also comes in very handy if someone asks you why you haven't tried the many treats on offer.
- **Set your buffet radar to full colour.** Think fresh salads and crudités and even the garnishes (no one will notice, trust me). Then, if you indulge in a few treats, at least you have eaten some vitamins, minerals and enzymes. Those enzymes will come in very handy to digest any cooked foods you eat. They will also 'crowd out' the less healthy foods.
- **Go Green.** Have you noticed that most buffet-eaters will add some greenery to their plate but eat the unhealthy bites first? Make sure you eat your greens first and only touch the rest if you're still hungry.
- **Be Generous... to yourself.** If it's possible to take your own contribution to the food on offer, this is your golden opportunity to guarantee there is some food you WANT to eat and CAN eat! Party hosts are often very happy to share the food responsibilities. Even if your host feels they should be perfect and do it all, simply insist that you contribute as a thanks for their generosity. Home-made chips and dips made from healthy ingredients are a great take-along. So easy to make and you can join in the dipping culture knowing that your contribution has no hidden nasties.

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Here is my recipe for baked chips to inspire you.



Parsnip chips with cranberry salsa



Sweet potato chips with sunshine salsa

You can make these with parsnips or sweet potatoes instead of starchy white potatoes.

Root vegetables help to keep us 'grounded' which is what our bodies naturally want at this time of year. Parsnips are rich in several health-benefiting phyto-nutrients, vitamins and fibre. In addition, they boast healthy levels of minerals like iron, calcium, copper, potassium, manganese and phosphorus.

This recipe ideally requires a handheld vegetable peeler to create thin strips along the length of the parsnips. But equally you could use a mandolin or food processing attachment. If you really don't have anything like this, you can get close with a sharp knife and a steady hand – just allow a little more time and experimentation on baking times.

I have created an infographic on [Pinterest](#) to illustrate how to cut these chips.

## Baked Root Chips

To make the amount of chips pictured:

### Ingredients

- 4 Fat Parsnips or 3 medium size sweet potatoes – organic roots can be used unpeeled
- Oil – olive or avocado
- Sea salt
- Dried herbs of your choice – optional

## Make the Magic

Ideally, use two or three baking sheets at once, so you don't have to spend time baking batches.

1. Preheat oven to 390f / 200c
  2. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper brushed with a little oil, or even better use a silicone baking sheet brushed with a little oil.
  3. Use your cutting aid of choice to cut the parsnip/sweet potatoes into the thinnest possible strips.
  4. Place the strips on your oiled baking sheet(s), lightly brush a little extra oil on the upper surface and sprinkle some salt over them. Sprinkle on any herbs you are using too.
  5. Place on the middle shelf of the oven and check them at 8-10 minutes cooking time. They should be just starting to brown on the edges.
  6. Remove from the oven, flip over each strip and return to the oven for approx. another 6 minutes.
- You can swap the oil for toasted sesame oil for an oriental flavour.
  - Add a tsp of wholegrain mustard, which goes really well with the sweetness of the roots.
  - Sprinkle with chopped chilli and cilantro for chips with a kick.
  - Perfect for dipping into home-made salsa, guacamole or sour cream dips.
  - These are best made on the day of eating to retain maximum crispiness, but they do keep well for 24 hours in a sealed container. Make sure they are completely cooled before storing.

These healthy chips are great served with this Christmassy cranberry salsa, full of fresh healthy ingredients and natural sweetness from the cranberries.

## Christmassy Cranberry Salsa

### Ingredients

- 2 big handfuls tomatoes
- 1 handful dried cranberries
- 2 limes
- 1 small onion or bunch of spring onions
- ½ fresh chilli – more or less depending on your heat requirement
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 inch fresh ginger, peeled
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro
- Sea salt

Finely chop or food-process all the ingredients except the limes.

Squeeze the juice of the limes over the mixture, stir well and season with salt to taste.

This can be made up to 5 days in advance and kept in a sealed container in the fridge, allowing those lovely flavours to marinate.

The Sunshine Salsa pictured above is a recipe from my book Don't Toss the Juicer Pulp!

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### Festive Food Hack #2 – Juicing When it's F-F-Freeeeezing

The cold winter months can be the most challenging to stay healthy, and especially if you're a convert to juicing. We know all the benefits of juicing healthy, fresh ingredients... but all we really want is warmth!

If you have a juicer, and especially if it's gathering dust since the temperature dropped (if you're in the southern hemisphere feel free to ignore this!), this juice recipe will at least help your juicing taste buds get into the Christmas spirit. Instead of tropical sunshine, this recipe imparts feelings of a deeper sweetness, with cinnamon and ginger bringing spicy warmth and blood sugar regulation.

And you should know by now.... don't toss that leftover pulp! We have a very festive plan for that in the next food hack...

### Winter Warming Juice

One of the highlights of the cold months for me is the arrival of persimmons on the grocery shelves.

Tasting like the exotic love child of a mango and a nectarine, these super sweet-tasting fruits contain worthy levels of vitamins A and C to ward off winter chills, along with B-Complex vitamins, and minerals.

They also have a healthy fibre content, which we'll be using in the in a further food hack.

This juice will not only help to control those pesky festive sugar cravings with its natural, grounding sweetness, drinking juices laden with raw enzymes will help your body digest any heavy Christmas foods you simply can't resist!



### Ingredients

- 1 Sweet potato - peeled
- 1 Large orange - rind and pith peeled off, cut in half widthways and remove any pips
- 1 Persimmon – peeled (you can substitute with nectarine or other stone fruit if you can't source persimmon)
- 1 Pear – top and tailed, quartered and any pips cut out
- 1 Large Carrot – top and tailed
- 2 inches of ginger - skin peeled off
- Pinch of ground cinnamon

Juice all ingredients, pour into a glass, stir in the cinnamon and drink!

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### Festive Food Hack #3 - The Obligatory Christmas Pudding Moment...

Is it just me, or do you also feel obliged to dig into a serving of that super-rich tradition that is Christmas pudding? And of course, it wouldn't be complete without a good dollop of cream or brandy-laced custard...

I've always had a mental block when it comes to Christmas cakes and puddings. It's a weird thing. I like the taste of all those Christmassy flavours and yet the traditional treats that use them just don't do anything for me.

So, on a quest to create a Christmassy recipe with all those lovely festive flavours that also utilised healthy juice pulp... I got to work and got my inspiration on...

No one was more surprised than me when I made Christmas puddings! And no one was even more shocked at how awesomely delicious they are! It's like they have all the right flavours, they even have a rich enough texture to be deemed Christmassy... but they're also lighter and don't make you feel like you just swallowed a bowling ball whole. And because of the fabulous fibre content, you only need a small portion to feel satisfied and the fibre will regulate your blood sugars so you don't get that sugar high followed by the couch coma.

So, if you're game enough to serve up your juicing leftovers to your relatives (some of you may get an inappropriate level of satisfaction from this, I won't tell on you...), why not give this twist on Christmas a go?

See that proliferation of cream? Yeah, not cream. Well, not the cream you expect it to be... read on to find my face-palm where-have-you-been-all-my-life 'whipped cream' discovery...



## Juice Pulp Christmas Pudding (and gateaux and trifle)

You won't believe this recipe is made from your leftover pulp! But trust me, there's plenty of goodness left in that pile of squidginess and it's a perfect base for a spicy, fruity makeover.

The Zesty Cream has been a revelation for me and I hope you'll feel the same about it. The fats in coconut milk are higher quality and more easily utilised by the body than those found in processed dairy creams, and if you're avoiding dairy this means you never need to miss out.

### Ingredients

#### Pudding Ingredients:

- All the pulp from Winter Warming Juice – approx. 1 ½ cups
- 1 cup ground nuts
- 12-20 dried dates – de-stoned (I used a 200gram pack of Halawi dates)
- 1 cup mixed dried fruit – soaked for 2hours-overnight in your liquid of choice. I used a mix of apricots, figs, cranberries and cherries, but you could use any of your favourites.  
I soaked in a tea made with 2 'Winter Spice' teabags. You could add some of your favourite liqueur for a more boozy version. Use enough liquid to cover the fruit.
- ¼ cup whole chia seeds soaked in ¼ cup of water
- 1 tablespoon baking powder (use a gluten free brand if you are gluten intolerant)
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon natural vanilla essence or the seeds from a fresh vanilla pod
- 1-2 tablespoons honey/maple syrup – use maple syrup for vegan version
- 2 tablespoons cacao powder - optional

#### Zesty Cream Ingredients:

- 2 large cans Full Fat Coconut Milk or 2 small cans of pure coconut cream (make sure they do not contain added guar gum or xanthan gum) IMPORTANT: refrigerate the unopened cans overnight before using
- 2 large oranges – grate the zest and squeeze the juice
- 1-2 tablespoons honey/maple syrup – use maple syrup for vegan version

## **Make the Magic**

### **To make the pudding mixture:**

1. Preheat oven to 190c / 375f
2. If using a silicone baking tray, brush it with a generous layer of oil  
If using a metal baking tray, line with baking/greaseproof paper and brush the paper with oil
3. Thoroughly combine ALL the ingredients in a mixing bowl, preferably using your hands to really squelch it all together and ensure the chia seeds distribute as these will bind it together
4. Spread the mixture onto your baking tray and spread out evenly to approx. half inch thickness
5. Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes – you are looking for the mixture to dry out a little and brown slightly on top
6. Remove from the oven and transfer the baked mixture to a flat surface – I use a chopping board, placed on top of the mix and then flip it upside down, giving it a tap to loosen it. Don't worry if some sticks to the tray or paper, it will turn out fine for what's coming next.

### **To make the Zesty Cream:**

The inspiration and practical steps for this recipe were inspired by the wonderful Angela Liddon at OhSheGlows and you can find an excellent, step-by-step illustrated guide to this on her website [HERE](#)

1. Take your cans out of the fridge and open.
2. If you are using coconut milk, drain off the milky water. If you are using coconut cream there should not be any liquid, just solid cream.
3. Transfer all the solid cream to a mixing bowl and whip with an electric or hand whisk until the cream begins to soften and form stiff peaks.
4. Add the orange zest and a tablespoon of the orange juice and honey/maple syrup and whisk again until they are combined.
5. Don't over-whisk into soft peaks for these recipes, as the gateaux especially requires some stiffness in the cream.

This amazing concoction will blow your mind! It's so creamy and delicious. You can refrigerate this for later use – it will change texture slightly to become like a mousse, which is awesome but can be turned back to cream with another whisking.

### To make the Mini Xmas Puds:

7. After cooling the mix until you can handle it, tear off sections of the mixture and roll into balls roughly the size of golf balls.
8. Place them on a clean baking tray and return to the oven for another 5-10 minutes.  
This is just to firm them up a little more without drying them out too much, so make sure they don't brown too much.
9. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.
10. Decorate with the zesty cream and serve extra on the side. Tip: I used a clean artists brush to paint the snow-effect cream on the puds.



These mini puds would be ideal for a buffet, even presented as 'cake pops' on sticks.

### To make the Messy Xmas Gateaux:

11. Cut the pudding sheet into two even sized pieces and set one on your serving plate
12. At this point you could spread a layer of your favourite jam, marmalade or preserve onto the pudding layer.
13. Spread a thick layer of coconut cream on top
14. Carefully lay the second pudding layer on top of the cream
15. Again, another layer of jam can be added at this stage (it is Christmas, after all!)
16. Spread another layer of coconut cream on top  
You can refrigerate this until you are ready to serve. It will keep covered in the fridge for up to 2 days! Simply cut into squares to serve.  
If you're wondering about my holly garnish, the leaves were cut into holly shapes from fresh stevia leaves and the berries are dried cherries rolled into balls, so it's all edible ;-)



### To make the Zesty Xmas Trifle:

17. You will need some extra oranges/satsumas, peeled with a knife and segments cut out  
If you're really awesome, you could soak these in your favourite liqueur before using  
(I know I would love you forever if you served me that!)
18. Simply load layers of oranges, torn up pudding mix and cream into fancy glasses and garnish with whatever festive accessories you have to hand. Easy peasy...erm... orange squeezy?





I hope you've enjoyed my top three Festive Food Hacks to help you survive the holidays with your smile and your health goals intact.

If you've found this worksheet via my book Don't Toss the Juicer Pulp... Thank You!

I hope you are enjoying the book and it's inspiring you to conduct your own pulpy experiments. And if it feels right for you, **I would so appreciate you leaving a review on Amazon** – we all know how valuable those reviews from our peers can be when deciding on a book choice, so please get in the mix if you feel so inclined.

And if you're feeling sociable, please join me on Facebook and Pinterest where I share lots of everyday fun stuff that doesn't get as far as my blog.



Having fun with the pulp recipes? Wraps revolutionised your lunches? Brownies winning over sceptical kids?

Tell me more!

I would love to hear your pulpy triumphs and also any challenges.

If you have any questions about recipes, or want to share your success, please do get in touch with me at [andrea@lifeafterbread.co.uk](mailto:andrea@lifeafterbread.co.uk)

And finally, if you are feeling stuck in your plans for health domination, I offer a completely free Health Barrier Breakthrough Session to help get you unstuck. Simply fill in the form [HERE](#) and I will contact you to arrange a suitable time.

These sessions, like my health coaching program sessions, can take place by phone, skype call or video call if you're brave enough 😊 The choice is yours!

In love and health,

Andrea 💚