It is all so inviting – a masterful vegan centerpiece, stuffing, gravy, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, sweet potato casserole, roasted veggies, pumpkin pie…. It is estimated that the average person devours 3,000 to 4,500 calories during a standard Thanksgiving celebration. You could burn that many calories with a very brisk walk, but you’d be walking for 12 to 17 hours! Sharing delicious food with the people you love is something we all treasure. On the other hand, few of us enjoy the feeling of being stuffed, and fewer still are smiling when they step on the scales after the holidays. The good news is that there are ways to enjoy holiday feasts without overindulging. Here are 10 tips to help ensure enjoyment without regrets:

1. **Serve up healthy foods.** When you have guests, serve up healthy appetizers, main dishes, desserts, and snacks. Instead of offering calorie-laden snacks such as cookies, bars, and chips, offer beautiful stuffed veggies, kale chips, and dehydrated crackers with beet hummus. Limit or avoid added fat in main dishes and focus on developing flavors with seasonings. Learn to plate your food for aesthetic appeal.

2. **Eat more slowly, and more mindfully.** It is easy to justify a jumbo portion when you only eat grandma’s cornbread stuffing twice a year. However, the greatest enjoyment comes in the first few bites, so savor every morsel. Put your utensils down between bites and delight in the company. Think about all the effort that went into purchasing and preparing the food and relish it with a grateful heart.

3. **Load up on lower calorie items.** Be generous with portions of less calorically dense items such as Brussels sprouts, green beans, squash, carrots, parsnips, turnips, and salads. When your plate is brimming with food, you feel quite indulgent, even when calories are being spared.
4. **Be skimpy with portions of high calorie foods.** While there is no need to deny yourself the dishes you love most at a celebration meal, be conscious of your serving size. You will enjoy a one-quarter or one-half cup serving every bit as much as a 1 or 2 cup serving. Remember, there are generally a lot of items to consume at Thanksgiving dinner, so small servings rapidly add up to a big meal.

5. **Avoid starving yourself.** If you are ravenous when a meal is served, you are more likely to take larger portions, and more apt to overeat. When you know you will be feasting for dinner, it is tempting to skip meals. If you want to eat less earlier in the day to save calories for dinner, consider eating a lower calorie (veggie and fruit heavy) breakfast and lunch, or eating one meal (brunch) before dinner.

6. **Be slow with seconds.** Wait at least 20 minutes from the start of your meal before going back for seconds. This is typically the amount of time for the brain’s appetite control center to register fullness. In most cases, the first plate will be plenty to fill you up. Remember that a hefty dessert is yet to come.

7. **Go lightly on dessert.** Plant-based pumpkin cheesecake or pumpkin pie with coconut whipping cream can easily exceed 500 calories, so keep your portion tiny. At potlucks, avoid filling your plate with a sample of every dessert offered. This could easily add up to 1,000 calories or more. Instead, select a small sample of no more than 3 items and arrange them attractively on your plate.

8. **Minimize liquid calories.** Liquid calories do not register fullness the way solid calories do, so it is easy to consume 400-500 calories in liquids without feeling like you consumed a thing. If you are drinking wine or other alcoholic beverages, stop at one serving. If your preference is a non-alcoholic sparkling juice, fill your glass with sparkling soda water and just a touch of the juice. Sweet beverages such as apple cider, lemonade and fruit punch can easily contain over 100 calories per serving. Stick to water, sparkling water, or tea when you can.

9. **Keep your mouth entertained while you are cooking.** If you are the founder of the feast, be conscious of the calories you might be consuming when tasting the food. If you must taste, make it the tiniest bite possible. Better yet, enlist a
helper. To reduce temptation, talk to someone, sing, suck on a mint, or otherwise keep your mouth occupied while you are cooking.

10. **Use dainty dishes.** When your tableware is smaller, you tend to eat smaller portions. Crack out your grandma’s china, as it is likely significantly smaller than your current tableware. Use beautiful small plates for dessert. Work on the aesthetics and keep portions controlled.

**Happy Thanksgiving!**