



THE NUTRITION BARRE PRESENTS:

A MINDFUL (NOT MINDF*CKED) HOLIDAY SEASON

BE THE MASTER OF YOUR HEALTH
AT EVERY GATHERING THIS YEAR!

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This isn't your mama's holiday nutrition + fitness guide.

If you want to have your holiday, and eat your pie too, welcome! Here at **The Nutrition Barre**, we're **mindful**, not *mindf*cked*, when it comes to nutrition + fitness. Translation: We DON'T go on "diets". Allow me to be your guide this holiday season, but first, some good old fashioned housekeeping:

YOU WON'T learn how to burn off dinner and dessert.
(Or that spinach artichoke dip.)

YOU WON'T be forced to complete 2hrs of cardio
to *earn* your traditions.

YOU WON'T be told what you can and can't eat.

YOU WILL be shown how to navigate the holidays
while feeling your absolute best.

**YOU WILL HAVE HOMEWORK.
ACTION = RESULTS!**

How to use this guide:

**No matter what happens,
no matter what you read:**

LIVE YOUR LIFE!

- If a tip doesn't make sense: skip it.
- Have a better idea: do it.
- If you think, "this all sounds great but I'm pigging out anyway": pig out. I won't be there to stop you.

However, if you want this to be the holiday season where you don't have a guilt trip regarding your choices, keep reading, and more importantly: **take action!**

This isn't an all-or-nothing approach. I don't expect you to try every tip. I do expect that if this is something you care about, you'll pick a few to try. There's even a section at the end for you to map it all out.

Disclaimer: This guide isn't a prescription, diagnosis, or personal plan. Always consult your doctor and care team when it comes to nutrition, fitness, and your overall health. If anything goes against the guidance you've received, please skip it. Always listen to your body and intuition. If something doesn't feel right, don't do it.

LET'S DIG IN, SHALL WE?

mindf*cked to mindful:

Coming into the holiday season with awareness around your behavior and implementing a few mindset techniques is the best way to start. (Don't worry, I'll break down a typical holiday gathering later.)

This isn't the only time you'll be around these foods, so just eat what you want.

You don't have to act like this is the only day that you can eat turkey, mashed potatoes, mac-n-cheese, pie, cookies, etc. You can eat these foods ANY time of year. What a privilege! Give yourself permission to eat what you want and skip what you don't.

**IF YOU SKIP
THIS PART,
BE PREPARED TO
BE MENTALLY**

Unprepared

A "SCARCITY" mindset around food is going to trigger your brain into survival mode. It's not that serious, *it's the holidays*. Avoid a free-for-all by giving yourself the freedom to choose. (What a concept!)

Indulge vs. Overindulge

There's a big difference between eating a few bites of foods that you don't normally eat and eating the entire tray (whether you love it or hate it). Just because you indulged in a slice of your favorite pie, that doesn't mean you messed up your progress so much that it's game over and you must eat the whole thing to win the prize of "MOST LIKELY TO FEEL GUILTY AFTER THIS IS ALL OVER".

Rewrite Your Story

Do you go into the holidays with the story that you always overeat even though you don't want to, and that exact scenario ends up happening? Try going into the season with the confidence that you'll have control AND enjoy yourself. Write this script for yourself.

It's Not Just About The Food

If the holidays are too food centric for you, you have the power to change that. Bring games, a karaoke machine, sports equipment, crafts, playing cards, anything that you can do with the family that's NOT food related. Spice it up!

Wear COMFORTABLE Clothes

As if tight jeans could stop any of us from enjoying Grandma's mashed potatoes. If you want to wear tight pants because you love them and feel great in them, wear the tight pants. Don't wear them and think for one second that it'll stop you from getting seconds IF you're hungry for them. Wear clothes that you feel good in. I'll start my day in leggings/sweats and end it that way. Thank you for coming to my TED TALK.



before the gathering

eat:

It's tempting to "save calories" but this causes you to eat more because you're *hangry* upon arrival.

Eat nutrient dense, and satiating, meals before the festivities.



remember:

Restricting and binging flock together.

byod:

Bring your own dishes if you want to have nutrient dense foods that help you feel your best. Share your creations.



before the gathering

water:

Drink plenty of water before the feast. This will set you up for listening to your hunger cues with more accuracy. If you're properly hydrated, you won't get a false hunger reading from thirst. Us humans get confused.



workout:

Get your workout in before you have other obligations. Avoid overtraining, which may cause hangry episodes later.

meditate:

It's about to get LOUD!
Give yourself a quiet moment before arrival. Get centered. Prepare yourself.



during the gathering

Slow Your Rolls

The day isn't a race, and even if it was, you would pace yourself. Focus on great conversation, laughter, and tasting your food. If you eat too fast, you won't be able to track your hunger cues well.

Eat Off A Plate

If you're going to give yourself one "rule", I would choose this one: **eat off a plate**. I'm not saying how much you need to put on said plate, or how many plates you can eat. Skip walking around aimlessly popping things in your mouth. Make plates. Much easier to keep track visually than arbitrarily snacking.

You Don't Have To Finish

If you were told to clean your plate when you were 5, and are now having flashbacks, it's ok (and I'm sorry). **I'm here to remind you that you're an adult and can decide when you're done eating.**

The Proverbial Seconds

It's tempting to jump up and get seconds right away. Challenge yourself by waiting a few minutes, 10-15, if you can stomach it. You can make a mindful decision to grab something special that you still want to invest your tastebuds in. Or maybe you're done.

Don't Like it? DON'T EAT IT!

If you're allergic to nuts you're not going to eat anything with nuts. Same concept applies to food you can't stand. **Don't eat it**. If anyone cries about it, they should make an appointment with their therapist. Not your problem.

Lead With Nutrition

Your body is smart. Fill your plate with veggies, while also adding in the "indulgences." What this does is nourish your body so that you aren't left wanting more than you need. M&Ms aren't filling or nutrient dense, they're delicious! When you eat them, you get a dopamine hit, but no nutrition. Your body then turns into The Kid in Dick Tracy: "When do we eat?!" (Even though you just ate a whole bag of M&Ms.) Nourish first, indulge second.

To Track Or Not To Track?

If you're tracking calories, macros, and nutrients for a competition or illness, no one should stop you. If you're talking weight loss, I wouldn't recommend it. Calculating your food in front of people sounds like a recipe for toxic conversations. Monitoring portions with your hands is a nice way to be discreetly mindful.

Palm of hand: 1 serving protein
Fist: 1 serving fruits/veg
Both hands cupped: 1 serving carbs
Thumb: 1 serving fats

appetizers

Grab a plate, choose your favorites and skip the rest. Sit. Relax. Munch. Go for protein forward options for more satiation. You can always bring one as well.

Examples:

Deviled eggs
Shrimp cocktail
Mini meat/faux meatballs
Bean dip
Roasted chickpeas
Cowboy Caviar
Buffalo Chicken/Chickpea Dip

dinner

Protein Is Your BFF

Load up on protein and vegetables (where applicable) first. Then hit up carb/fat sides. Protein is going to give your digestion some serious work to do because it's the most satiating macro and requires the most energy to digest. If you're worried about having the munchies throughout the day, get that protein in.

Anecdote: I could probably eat half a tray of mac-n-cheese, but half a turkey (or half the lentil loaf)? No, thank you.

Swaps

If you dig it and won't miss it, "healthier" swaps are totally fine.

Examples:

Cauliflower mash instead of white potato.
Low-fat Dairy/Dairy-free ingredients
Grain-Free Stuffing
Less butter/cream: (sometimes ½ of what the recipe calls for is fine and won't ruin it. Unless you're baking).
Chickpea/Hearts of Palm/Edamame pasta
Low Sugar: Use less or stevia/truvia if that doesn't upset your stomach (*don't come after me if you're a stan for the insta-gurus that shriek about sweetener for attention. We're talking one dish, maybe two, for one day. Chill, Chad.*)

Build Your Plate

Fill ½ your plate with veggies (salad, roasted vegetables, green beans)

Next ¼ your protein (turkey, tofurky, lentil loaf, etc.)

Next ¼ your starch (mac-n-cheese, potatoes, bread, pasta, stuffing)

Fat topper: butter, gravy, sour cream

**remember those portion sizes based on your hands if that's helpful. Grab as many servings that will satisfy you.*

dessert

A little break between dessert and dinner is great, but it's my recommendation to not prolong this too much. You might be dousing that dessert on top of your digestive system already hard at work. That sugar hit could spark another feeding frenzy. It's like opening the dishwasher before it's done and putting a greasy pan in mid-way. *Results may vary.*

Build Your Plate:

Option 1: 1 slice of pie

Option 2: ½ slice of pie and some cookies, or a ½ slice of another pie.

Option 3: ¼ slice of pie, a few cookies, and a few of something else. Little bites of whatever you want to try.

**remember, put these sweets on one plate and sit f down!*

alcohol

You've heard these before I'm sure:

Pace yourself with water/seltzer/spritzers in between cocktails.

Eat before you start drinking.

Pick one type of alcohol for the DAY (beer/wine/liquor).

Alcohol and I are NOT friends, so I don't recommend it at all, but I know liquid courage is all some have, and I respect that. You do you.

If you are sober or are trying to be:

YOU'VE GOT THIS. When people push drinks on me, in all honestly, I flat out say it: No. I'm an alcoholic and practicing sobriety. It's true, but it also leaves little room for a rebuttal, unless the person is a Jerk Store. In that case, they win the ticket for me not talking to them all night.

walk the talk

Possible to go for a stroll after dessert? Go for it! This will help with digestion. Remember, you can't *undo* the calorie intake, but you can give your digestive system a little love at this time. Movement is always a good idea if you're able.

leftovers

First things first:

You don't have to eat leftovers if you don't like them.

(Notice a theme, yet?)

as a guest

Usually the host is more than thrilled if you volunteer to take a doggy bag home. Try out more dishes in the next coming days mindfully, instead of shoveling it all in now like a squirrel. You can freeze some. Add it here and there to your meals and have it fit into any tracking you desire.

as the host

While you, and hopefully your guests clean up, start to put together doggy bags. Take out/meal prep containers are great for this. Make some "TV dinners" and set them out near the door. Let people take as they go. Do this for appetizers and desserts too. People will take stuff if it's ready to go, and you'll feel less food pressure to eat it all. You can also help feed your neighbors and others in the community who might love a warm meal.

Eating Leftovers:

You don't have to recreate the same meal. Get creative!

cranberry sauce

Topper for yogurt, oatmeal, dips. Add to smoothies. PB & Cranberry sandwich. Spread for any sandwich.

turkey/protein

Sandwich, stir fry, salad, wraps, tacos, burritos, soup, pasta.

veggie sides

Veggie patties/pancakes, mashed potato bowls, scrambles, stir fries, salads, sandwiches, soups.

after the gathering

The Scale

If seeing a 7LB gain the next day is going to set you off, don't weigh yourself. Most of us will see that number pop post feast. Quite normal. Let your body catch up. It might take a few days to readjust. In my experience, this is usually 2-5 days, depending on the person.

You Can't Gain Fat Over 1 Meal

If you do gain 7LBS overnight, know that it's scientifically impossible to gain 7LBS of fat from 1 meal. 7LBS of fat is 24,500 calories. Even Michael Phelps didn't eat that much when he was training (his highest was 10,000 calories a day). Those 7LBS are a mish-mash of extra salt/water retention, glucose storage, and probably a lot of digesting still needs to happen. Let it go, *literally*.

Post-Gathering Meals

You might still be digesting yesterday's nibbles and the thought of breakfast is not there. That's ok. If you're usually a breakfast person but you're not hungry the morning after – chill. No need to force breakfast unless you have low energy/blood sugar. In that case, I would suggest something like yogurt, oats, smoothie, or banana and nut butter. Eat your first full meal when ready.

Avoid Overtraining

What you ate the day before can't be "burned off" the day after. The "Calorie Clock" has been reset. Move on by moving your body for today's goals. If you start to overtrain, you might get ravenous and have a binge.

Avoid Under-eating

You don't have to starve yourself the day after to make up for the day before. Remember that "Calorie Clock", you need calories everyday. If you restrict too much, you might binge.

Skip The Guilt Trip

A holiday get-together shouldn't be considered a shame festival if you eat more than you had planned. You might feel physically uncomfortable, but it'll pass. Eating food isn't shameful.

Use That Extra Fuel

Some of those extra nutrients (glucose) have been stored away in your body for future use. You can use this to your advantage if you have the energy. I'm talking making GAINS. Your muscles are fed. This might be a great time to get in a heavy lifting session, or a long run if that's your jam.

Rest Days Are Cool Too

If you're not feeling your best, take a rest day, go on a long walk, or practice Yoga. You're allowed to relax.

OPBS: other people's bullsh*t

Here's what you can say to people who think you should go on their diet of the month, or are just boundary vampires in general. The formula is to hit them with a short answer and then change the subject immediately.

WHAT THEY'LL SAY

VS

WHAT YOU'LL SAY

"That's all you're eating?"
"That's too much food."

"Are you on a diet?"

"Don't you want to have more of my [insert-dish-you-dont-like-here]?"

"But it's the Holidays!"

"You're not drinking?"

"I'm good with this amount of food, how are you?"

"I'm actually on a search for a fun show to watch, any suggestions?"

"Not yet, maybe later." or
"I'll take some home."
"How's your dog?"

"I know, I love this time of year. I'm pacing myself. It's chilly today!"

"I'm sober". or
"No."
"Can I get you anything?"

This is probably one of the hardest things about the holidays. Don't let other people make decisions for you at these get-togethers. Let them say all of the nonsense that they want. Brush it off with quick answers. You don't have to explain why you are or aren't doing anything when it comes to your body and health. It's your business and you owe no one an explanation. If you do want to get on your soap box for therapeutic reasons, go for it, but you may have just opened Pandora's Lunchbox.

your plan starts now:

A feel good holiday season starts and ends with YOU.

Writing down how you plan to prioritize your needs is the first and most crucial step. Go in with confidence, come out with success. You define what that success is too. Lucky you!

FILL THIS OUT ON YOUR COMPUTER OR PRINT IT OUT.

What will a “guilt-free” holiday look like to you?

What will you do to achieve a "guilt-free" holiday?

How do you want to feel before your holiday meals?

How do you want to feel after your holiday meals?

What kind of movement will you do the day of the event?

What kind of movement will you do the day after the event?

your plan starts now:

Keep going! You're doing great.

What foods will you eat with pleasure this holiday season?

What foods will you skip?

What NON-Food activities will you enjoy with family and friends?

What are your go-to responses for OPBS (other people's bullsh*t?)

What will you do with leftovers?

Overall, how do you feel about enjoying your holidays while also honoring your body?



About Me

(Warning: diet culture + eating disorder talk coming in hot. Read with care.)

Hey, I'm Kristen. I have your typical "Millennial on the Cusp of X" story when it comes to diets:

I was called "tubby" at the age of 12 by my grandma (family gatherings, am I right?), which swiftly enrolled me into the Slim Fast + Atkins School of Diet CULTure. I eventually graduated to Weight Watchers in my 20s, while continuing my education in restriction, purging, diet pills and all the other torturous credentials.

I spent over a decade getting a PHD in Binge Eating and graduated with Obesity Honors. All kidding and word salad aside, I was sick and miserable by the time I hit the age of 37.

I was tired all the time, depressed, drenched in sweat by the time I got to work because SUBWAY STAIRS. Blood pressure was ticking up and I was fainting on the subway.

Being addicted to alcohol, weed, and all the snacks was my jam. Anything that had the potential to numb my physical pain and mental suffering went in my mouth. I became a far cry from the competitive dancer I was in my youth. I went from kicking higher than a Rockette to kicking and screaming my way through life.

Enter March 2020. I contracted Covid 19 after going to the last concert on Earth (or so my husband and I called it.) I was unfazed with a mild fever and some chills. After 3 days, poof, I felt better. I thought it was over. Covid 19 got nothing on me!

Cut to the next day: I thought I was going to die. Fever spiked, I felt so dizzy and nauseous that I couldn't keep my head up. I crawled to bathroom. Aches, pains, tight chest, all the TMI's you don't want to hear about. The thought of food made me ill.

The kicker (as if all that wasn't already): I wasn't coughing or gasping for air, therefore, the Telehealth Doctors (there were many) told me the same thing, "Ride it out, Hun. Only come to the ER if you think you're dying." I eventually asked one of them, "But what if I die in my sleep?" I know how to end a conversation in one sentence.

2 ½ weeks of pure hell later, I humored the thought of food. I ate a cracker and chipped my tooth. The Pedialyte and Gatorade turned my teeth into chewy chiclets.

I tried soup next and nursed maybe ¼ cup. That night my fever broke, I was covered in hives, and I asked for some pasta. And I ate it!

While all of this was going on, I laid in bed wondering if this was it. I played my life backwards, forwards, and sideways, unhappy with how this story was ending (if it was). I danced with the Devil and eventually said to myself, “If I survive, I'm going to do everything in my power to live as mindfully as possible.”

You see, I saw people who were my age dying. It scared the sh*t out of me. Hallucinating while having a fever put my face in those headlines and news stories. I wondered when my 15 minutes of tragic fame would come. I also started to dig deep into science to figure out why I had a “respiratory” disease and yet barely had a symptom of that nature.

Not to make this all about Covid 19, but it's not just a respiratory disease. It can also show up as a vascular, neurological, and gastrointestinal disease. It's a choose your own nightmare kind of illness. My heart goes out to you if you've dealt with it and are still dealing with it. Or if you have family and friends that are struggling.

The way the science spoke to me, was that my body was so inflamed when that virus started to populate in my cells that it was going to be a rough ride before it even started. My body was prime real estate for a pathogen. A welcome host. My goal, if I survived, was to work on being the absolute worst “host” ever.

The rest of this story is long and anecdotal, but it ends well. I lost 100 pounds without dieting, became an “athlete” again, and invested my time in earning multiple nutrition + fitness credentials. Most importantly, the inflammation is not nearly where it was. Mission possible!

I share this so that you can see where I'm coming from.

Where I've been matters in my approach to helping you because I think that diet culture is what made me so susceptible to living an unhealthy life. Unfortunately, I had to hit rock bottom to see the light. That doesn't have to be you.

I also want to caveat that this isn't about a number on the scale. My number happens to be dramatic, but it doesn't have to be for you. So many other victories have occurred in this process, and they outshine the scale. My "number" is just how the chips fell as I worked on my behaviors, one at a time.

For more, you can find me on Instagram: ([@thenutritionbarre](#)) or subscribe to [my newsletter](#) for weekly guidance.

Ok, enough about me. Just letting you know that I've been there, binged that.

Have a happy, healthy, and safe holiday!





THANK YOU!

I hope this guide serves you well for any gathering you attend.

Holidays, birthdays, conferences, work-parties, vacations and more; these tactics work as long as you choose the ones that fit your lifestyle best, and most importantly, you stay consistent. *"Everyday, in some way."* I firmly believe that if you take a mindful approach to your health, instead of the next fad/crash diet, you'll see lasting results vs. quick fixes. Thank you for reading.

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