

A photograph of a dining room decorated for Christmas. On the left, a large, green Christmas tree is heavily decorated with various ornaments, including a Santa Claus figurine, a snowman, and several gold and silver baubles. The tree is also adorned with white and gold garlands. In the background, a dining table is set with white plates, glasses, and a bottle of wine. A white chair with a dark wood backrest is visible in the foreground. A large, ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling, casting a warm glow. The overall atmosphere is cozy and festive.

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living well
this christmas
season

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As the weather turns colder, the days get shorter, and lights start to show up on trees, houses, and storefronts, the child in each of us knows that Christmastime has arrived. There's something about the smell of pine in the air and the sound of sleigh bells that creates in us a stirring of emotions... this time of year is special. It's the time of year for celebrating the year you're closing behind you, creating memories with those you love, and repeating traditions you began as a child.

This season is busy, though. There are so many places to go, people to see, and to-do's to knock off the list. Commercials, social media, and the world around us are screaming at us all at once, reminding us that there's more to do to make this season better... to live it well.

If you're someone who is working hard to be mindful of nutrition, the idea of spending every weekend attending a holiday party might conjure up a bit of anxiety...

If you're a mother who feels the pressure of making this season just perfect for your family...

If you're having trouble finding the time to put forth the effort in finding great gifts for those you love...

If you're just trying to survive the holidays and get to 2017 as fast as you can, but you're also afraid that you'll have another year like this one...

This guide is for you.

With a little bit of planning, some grace, and a whole lot of love, this season can be all you want it to be! I know that after reading this, you will have the skills you need to make this a happy, healthy, and tasty holiday season while still experiencing the joy it has to offer.

Merry Christmas,

Chandler

healthy holiday survival guide

staying on track during the holidays

The weather starts to cool down, the commercials on TV start to incorporate sleigh bells, and the hustle and bustle of the stores starts to pick up... You know what time it is... and so does that voice inside your head! With every holiday party, family gathering, and classroom celebration, you'll be faced with that voice; Are these holiday treats a fun way to celebrate and create memories or an excuse to forget your standards and a temptation to 'experience the season' with unhealthy indulgences? Every time, you'll have to decide. Yes, indulging a bit is a part of the fun, but the key is to remember these three words when it comes to holiday indulging: **moderation, grace, and joy.**

moderation:

Everything in moderation... except for moderation, itself.

This is a special time of year where the food, drinks, and celebration all serve a purpose... they are all a part of the Christmas experience. When you indulge, indulge in moderation. Keep it in perspective and don't go overboard.

grace:

When you do indulge [and in case you happen to overindulge, tomorrow is a new day. Wake up brand new and focus on your goals all over again. Don't fall into that mindset of "I've already been so bad... I'll just give myself until the new year." Kick regret to the curb. Practice forgiveness and start every day [and sometimes every party] fresh and new, as if you hadn't ever messed up and are sticking right on track!

joy:

Remember that this season is full of memories to be made and loved ones to be celebrated! Don't lose sight of the joy of the season. Keep yourself grounded, but also participate in that joy. We could all use some more of it!

surviving all the parties without gaining all the pounds

- When you're at an event with a spread of options to choose from, **eat the protein first**. Studies show that when you eat the protein and vegetables first, it lowers your blood sugar level after the meal... remember that any sugar your body doesn't process, turns into fat.
- Try to stick to one drink per gathering. If your family happens to be at that gathering and you just NEED another, **remember the 1:1 rule**: for every alcoholic beverage, have a glass of water.
- Pick a champion. Go ahead and rank the indulgent foods based on how much you want it. This holiday season, YOU get to be the bachelorette in a world of sugary-sweet bachelors... **Give out your rose to the winner**. Pick the one unhealthy item that you MUST have, put it on your plate, and tell the others goodbye.
- **Instead of wine, opt for a Tito's and soda**. Tito's is an organic triple-distilled vodka and soda water has zero calories. This drink has way less sugar than a glass of wine and typically takes longer to sip on. Add a slice of lime for a little more flavor.

healthy holiday survival guide

fa la la la fitness

Stuck inside at grandma's house for a few days? You don't have to forgo your fitness just because you're at your in-laws' house. All you really need is your body, a little bit of space and a few minutes to sweat. Here are 3 workouts you can do in your grandmother's living room. Want to add some weight? Grab 2 cans of vegetables or cranberry sauce! **I've included photos of the more confusing movements in case you need them!**

holiday fitness tips

- Remember to stay hydrated! Especially if you're eating foods with lots of salt or enjoying coffee or alcohol! Drink an extra glass or two each day!
- Make time to do **something** active. Whether it's one of these workouts or a walk around the park with the stroller or the dog, get up and move, even if it's just a little bit. Your body will thank you!
- Use cans of vegetables as added weight, or even chicken stock if you want something a little heavier!



These workouts were put together by my bestie and CrossFit coach, Michelle!

12 minute tinsel tabata

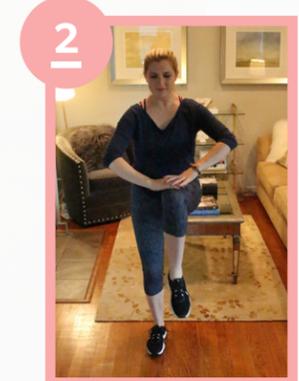
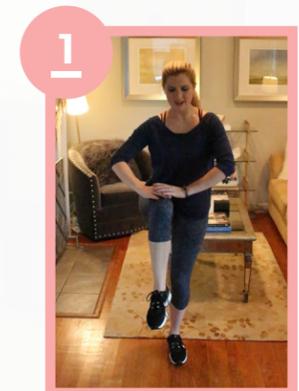
For this workout, you'll do 8 rounds total of tabata [that's a fancy word for do-the-movement-as-fast-as-you-can for 20 seconds and then rest-and-breathe for 10 seconds] rotating through the following movements:

- plank-ups [20 sec on, rest 10sec]**
 - high knees [20 sec on, rest 10 sec]**
 - jumping jacks [20 sec on, rest 10 sec]**
- **repeat 7 more times**

plank-ups



high knees



rudolph's run around the world

To train for Christmas Eve, Rudolph travels around the world 5 times. In honor of him and his hard work, you'll do 5 rounds total of the following movements:

burpees



- 5 burpees
- 10 air squats
- 20 mountain climbers
- 15 hollow knee tucks
- **repeat 4 more times

mountain climbers



hollow knee tucks



we three kings

The 3 Kings had to travel far to find the star of Bethlehem. There's a round in this workout for each of them. You'll need to find a chair, a couch, or a bench for the dips! Want to make those russian twists easier? Lightly place your heels on the ground! I suggest grabbing those cans for this workout! Complete 3 rounds total of the following movements:

- 10 squats
- 10 lunges
- 5 push-up's
- 5 dips
- 20 crunches
- 20 russian twists
- **repeat 2 more times

dips



russian twists



holiday cooking

healthier holiday recipes

bacon-wrapped dates with goat cheese

Prep Time: 15 minutes // Total Time: 25 minutes // Serves: 24 appetizers

ingredients

12 slices of uncooked bacon
24 whole dates
1 small log of goat cheese
24 toothpicks

instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F°.
2. Using a paring knife, cut a line down the center of the dates, length-wise and remove the pits.
3. Fill a small spoonful of goat cheese and, using your hands, stuff the cheese into the dates until all 24 are full.
4. Microwave the bacon for 2-3 minutes [you may have to do several rounds of bacon in the microwave, as you'll need to lay the bacon in individual strips on a plate prior to microwaving].
5. Cut the bacon strips in half width-wise to create shorter pieces
6. Wrap individual dates in the half-strips of bacon using a toothpick to secure it where the two ends overlap.
7. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes, turning the dates over halfway through.
8. Let cool a bit and enjoy!

paleo cranberry and sage buffalo meatballs

Prep Time: 15 minutes // Total Time: 30 minutes // Serves: 12-16 meatballs

ingredients

1 lb. ground buffalo
1 tbsp olive oil
½ cup chopped onion [one small onion]
⅓ cup dried cranberries, chopped
¼ cup parsley, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp sage, chopped
Salt and pepper

instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F°
2. Heat the oil in a skillet. Once oil is hot, sauté the chopped onion for 2 mins until softened.
3. Toss in garlic, parsley, and sage. Give it two good stirs and remove from heat.
4. In a large bowl, mix together the remaining ingredients. Add in the onion mixture and stir until well blended.
5. Taking a large spoonful of the meat mixture, roll the spoonful into a ball. Repeat until all the meat is rolled, making sure all the meatballs are uniform in size/diameter.
6. Drizzle the meatballs with a bit of olive oil and bake 15 mins.

cranberry and rosemary vodka gimlet

ingredients

2 ounces vodka [I use Tito's because it's triple distilled AND all-natural! Plus, it's GF and from Austin!]

¾ ounce fresh lime juice

¾ ounce simple syrup

fresh rosemary sprig

fresh cranberries

**Optional: Lime flavored La Croix

instructions

1. Fill a cocktail shaker with ice and pour in the vodka, lime juice, and simple syrup. Stir well with a spoon until very cold.
2. Rub the rosemary against the rim of a glass to allow the herb to open up and leave in the bottom.
3. Strain over the rosemary into a chilled glass, or strain over a rocks glass filled with ice [and rosemary]. Pour the lime-flavored soda to fill the rest of the glass. Garnish with fresh cranberries and serve immediately.



holiday cooking

holiday recipe swaps cheat sheet

Want to make this year's treats as healthy as possible? Here are some easy swaps you can make to make your treats a little bit healthier and allergen-friendly. The easiest way to do just that is to use all-natural ingredients. Head to Whole Foods and buy organic. Your meal may be a little bit more expensive, but you'll feel better after eating it!

recipe calls for: **milk**
swap it with: **almond milk**

This will help make your recipe dairy-free. For sweeter treats, use a vanilla almond milk. For savory treats, go with unsweetened almond milk.

recipe calls for: **sour cream**
swap it with: **greek yogurt**

This will significantly lower the amount of calories without affecting the taste. Want to make sure the yogurt is as tangy as sour cream would have been? Add a squeeze of lemon.

recipe calls for: **sweetened condensed milk**
swap it with: **sweetened condensed coconut milk**

This actually makes the recipe even sweeter, while removing the dairy. Pumpkin pie, anyone?

recipe calls for: **flour**
swap it with: **cup-for-cup gluten free flour**

This gluten free flour has taken out the hassle of figuring out the best blend of rice, almond, and coconut flours... for every cup of regular flour you'd use, you substitute one cup of this instead to make your recipe gluten free!

recipe calls for: **butter**
swap it with: **ghee or a grass-fed, all-natural butter like 'KerryGold'**

This will help get you as close to paleo as you can get while still eating yummy foods!

recipe calls for: **cheese**
swap it with: **goat cheese or manchego cheese**

Dairy-free cheese options that are actually tastier than the cheese itself!

making the most of the holiday season

when I look back on Christmastime as a little girl, I don't remember the exact gifts I asked for or received... I don't remember the color of the dress that my mom picked out for me to wear... I don't remember what we ate on Christmas Eve... I do, however, remember the traditions I looked forward to every year... opening family gifts on Christmas Eve, singing Christmas songs in the car as a family while we drove around looking at lights, eating Chili Cheese Grits on Christmas morning, having a sleepover with my sisters on Christmas Eve knowing that Santa was coming... reading the story of the 1st Christmas in the Bible by candlelight and then singing 'Silent Night' together... These are the things that I remember most.

as a mom, I've made it my goal to make Christmas special with traditions that encompass the joy of the season, make our family have something special that only we do together, and keep the true reason of Christmas at the forefront. Some of our traditions include:

- Drinking hot cocoa and driving around to look at Christmas lights
- Christmas Eve dinner of tamales and tortilla soup
- Christmas Morning breakfast of chili cheese grits
- The Jesse Tree [see next page]
- The Singing Advent Calendar
- The Giving Manger [see next page]
- Christmas classic books, music, and movies
- Personalized Christmas decorations
- iSantaCam and Elf on the Shelf

keeping Jesus at the center:

One thing I want to make sure that we focus on as a family is the true reason that we celebrate Christmas. I want little B to grow up knowing exactly what Christmas is all about, and that's celebrating the gift of grace, love, and joy that was given to us through the birth of Christ Jesus, our LORD. I want, more than anything, for B to know that because of the gift we have been given, we want to give and love as God has given to and loved us. Here are two Christmas traditions that we incorporate into our home at Christmas that keep the true purpose of the season at the forefront:

the giving manger:

This tradition is so wonderful for teaching children that the true meaning of following Jesus is to love and give to others. In order to prepare the manger for Jesus, you have to put straw in the bottom to make it comfortable for him. However, you can only place a piece of straw in the manger if you've done an act of kindness or service for someone else. As a family at the end of the day, you share what you did for others as you place the straw into the manger. Children learn quickly that giving IS receiving... all year long.

the jesse tree:

This is a special advent calendar that you begin on December 1st and continue until Christmas Day. Each day has a devotional and a symbolic ornament to place on the tree that represents the devotional of the day. What makes this unique, however, is that the devotionals follow the lineage of Christ [in Old Testament order], starting with creation, following through Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Solomon, David, Daniel, and many, many more! How incredible to make this a yearly tradition for your family! Your children learn the stories in the Bible and see how everything points to Jesus!

If you'd like to read more about what we do, head over to the [Holiday Shop](#) and check out 'Our Christmas Must-Haves', where I've rounded up all the things we use to make Christmas special. [Our Christmas Must-Haves](#)

gift ideas

A great, big part of what makes Christmas fun and special are the gifts we get to give and receive! Sometimes, though, it's hard to come up with gifts for everyone in the family. If you're looking for fun, creative ideas for gifts for everyone [including the dog], head on over to *The H is For...* [Holiday Shop](#) to see my picks for gifts for everyone!



for her



for him



for baby girl



for baby boy



for fido



for stocking stuffers



our christmas must-haves

looking forward to 2017

focusing on the new year

We choose a New Year's resolution to focus on the aspects in our lives that we want to grow in. How can we become better? What lifestyle changes can we implement to move forward in some aspect or another? The purpose of *The H is For...* is to inspire and encourage others to keep this way of thinking at the forefront of our lives. How can we live this life well?

One verse in the Bible that I love is Luke 2:52, "*Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man.*"

So often say we want to model ourselves after Jesus. How do we model our growth as a person? I believe this verse is the perfect model for how we should design our New Year's resolutions [these four aspects are what have inspired the 5 H's in my blog].

When making your resolution, pick a way you can grow in each category:
wisdom - How do you want to grow mentally? What do you want to learn more about?

stature - How do you want to grow physically? Find a goal you can confidently reach, add a tiny bit to it to push you out of your comfort zone and stick to it!

favor with God - How do you want to grow spiritually? Don't let the growth in your relationship with your Creator fall by the wayside in 2017!

favor with man - How do you want to grow relationally? What is one goal you can make to grow in your relationships with your friends and family?

resources for your resolution

Want to Find a New Health Challenge to try out in the beginning of 2017?

Here are some ideas! Check out these challenges I've done before:

[*Daily Greens Juice Cleanse](#)

[*The Macro Diaries](#)

[*The Whole Life Challenge](#)

I hope that you'll walk away from reading this feeling assured and confident that you're set up for success this holiday season. It's important to remember that it's okay not to be perfect. There's a good balance between sharing special moments and focusing on your goals. So, indulge moderately, have grace with yourself when you do so, and enjoy the holidays for what they are... a time of JOY!

Make the most of this season by spending time with your friends and family. Celebrate the birth of Jesus and bask in His grace and love! Focus on the reason for the season and celebrate those you love. Enjoy the moments, big and little. Then, focus on the new year. Turn your gaze inward and reflect on the person you are and the person you want to be. Set yourself up for success in the new year!

Thank you for being a part of my journey! I can't wait to see what 2017 has in store for us all!

Merry Christmas!
Chandler

Chandler

