

The Ten Commandments of Gastronomical Survival

By Steve Meyerowitz, Sproutman®

Ahh...The Power of Food. Sometimes food can be as addictive as drugs—ginseng, strawberries, and oysters are said to be aphrodisiacs and sugar in the form of ice cream or chocolate has been known to entrap even the most stoic. This is especially true at big holiday parties, family gatherings, and celebrations like New Years Eve, where Decadence, Mirth, and Overindulgence meet. Of course, it is fine to go expansive as long as you don't go explosive! Procter and Gamble sells more Pepto-Bismol at the end of the year than any other time. So, heartburn, indigestion, nausea, bloating, diarrhea are too often the results of our partying habits. But they don't have to be.



As we discussed in the pre-thanksgiving "[Holiday Overeating](#)" newsletter, the overpowering influence of lots of food, lots of friends, and lots of family, can swamp our normal levels of discipline. The human palate, don't forget, is a magical circuit board of nerve endings, taste sensations, memories, and programming built from years of associations with good and bad habits. So it's not unusual for even the most disciplined among us to be challenged under these circumstances. That's why we need a plan.

HOLIDAY SURVIVAL STRATEGY

Perhaps you're thinking: "I'm going to be fine. I don't need a strategy." Well, maybe so. But I say, better to be prepared. Because you never know when that heavy cream chocolate mousse will seep into your temporal lobe and before you know it you're "whipped" and the yolk's on you! I say: protect yourself and establish a strategy just like the army does before a battle or a football team before a pass. There is no substitute for planning.

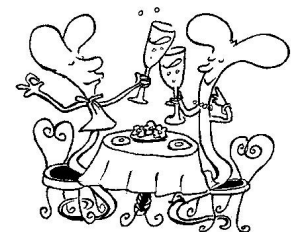
The 10 Commandments of Gastronomical Survival

or How to Manage Getting up from the Table after the Big Feast

1. Keep Smiling and Talking Instead of Chewing. (But no talking while you're chewing!) People are more important than pastries. So the more talking and smiling you do, the less you'll eat. Good cheer is good for digestion. On the other hand, anger and depression chill your furnace. So, try laughing at your uncle's jokes even if you don't want to. You'll be able to eat more.

2. Small Mouthfuls, Small Portions. The average stomach is a 12 by 6 inch sack. But because it is elastic, it expands when you overload it and that is when you feel full. Of course, at that point you are actually overfull—stretched out. Overtime, your stomach will shrink again if you fast or manage smaller portions. Be careful of big plates. Too much room means too much food. Try using a salad plate for your main dish.

3. Drink and Be Merry. True. But take most of your liquids on the front end of the meal so as not to dilute stomach enzymes. Sip small amounts of liquids during the meal enough to lubricate stomach contents. Try to avoid icy drinks. Ice numbs the stomach and turns off the flow for digestive juices. While you're at it, skip the sodas. Mainstream sodas are full of sugars, artificial sweeteners, artificial colors and flavors. They're basically liquid junk food.



4. Slow Down. Chew More. Eating slowly relaxes your stomach which in turn increases the secretion of digestive juices. Chewing until the food in your mouth is nearly liquid (chyme) improves digestion and reduces your stomach workload.



5. Go Light on the Carbs. You know....breads, cakes, cookies, pies, pasta, pizza, chips, crackers, etc. These foods fill you up fast but don't provide much nutrition. Take special care with sweets as they overtax your body's ability to regulate insulin and can stimulate the production of unfriendly bacteria.

6. Break the Overeating Cycle. Here's where the addictive nature of eating plays its devilish hand. Once you're in the groove, it's hard to stop. That's when you need to get up from the table. Visit the bathroom even if you don't need to. While you're there, rinse out your mouth, suck on a mint, even brush your teeth or use some mouthwash. The cleansing of the palate shuts down the sensory neurons on the tongue (tastebuds) and stops the transmission of electrical impulses to the brain. Basically, you're shutting down the tongue-brain-stomach response. At that point, discipline is easy. Even if you just stand up and stretch or get some fresh air, that might be enough to break the overeating cycle. If that doesn't work, start doing the dishes.

7. Pre-Dinner Stomach Prep. Some fresh air and a few deep breaths before you start eating adds more oxygen to light your furnace. Add some stretches and you'll be amazed how a little blood circulation and oxygen enhance digestion. While you're at it, bring a few digestive enzymes with you and take them with your drinks before the (solid food) meal. Water and enzymes help cleanse and prep your stomach for the big tsunami. It's like cleaning your house in preparation for your guests.

8. Choose. You Can't Eat Everything. The big smorgasbord of foods, appetizers, desserts, breads, dips, sauces, etc. is a huge temptation. Even the most strict amongst us could start to feel like a kid in a candy store. But if you are prepared for this Disneyland effect, you could easily control it. Remember, your stomach is not a cement mixer. You can't eat everything. Preview the array of foods before you and decide what to touch and what to leave alone. Think of it like money and be frugal. You only have so many digestive credits to spend before you start running deficits. Don't bankrupt your system!

9. Stimulate Digestion. Bitter herbs. Good digestion is fundamental to good health and a good practice is to add some supplemental enzymes or bitter herbs at the end of your meal. This is not an excuse to overeat, but it will help. Like snow tires—they won't turn your car into a snow plow, but they will keep you going straight down the road. Two popular vegetarian enzymes are bromelain (derived from pineapples) and papain (from papaya). And bitter herbs have been used in Europe for generations. While not enzymes themselves, they stimulate the secretion of our own enzymes. Some popular ones are cinnamon, ginger, anise, fennel, goldenseal, dandelion, and gentian root. Chewing on a cinnamon stick is fun and it tastes good too!

10. Exercise to Eat More. Athletes prepare for a marathon. They don't just show up and start running. You need to get in shape too, if you don't want your big feast to turn into a big funk. In other words....if you have the urge to splurge, then you need to be buff for your bash. Active people can eat more without the same penalty. Aerobic exercise increases oxygen levels in the blood and lungs which in turn enhances enzyme production and waste removal. Running, biking, dancing, trampoline and treadmill are all ideal to help you get in shape for the big meal. Exercising to a sweat on a regular basis increases metabolism which means you'll digest your food faster.



So, get in shape for the big meal if you want to eat more of it. But don't pig out! Being decadent is not a path to happiness. Derive pleasure from people not food.

What if you Overdo it?

Okay. Let's say you forgot to bring this newsletter to the party and everything went wrong. Well, the new year is a great time to start a cleanse. Let's face it. Not everything we stick in our stomachs is worth keeping. Americans are famous for taking better care of our cars than we do of ourselves. If you clean your car and clean your house, why not clean your inner house? If you own your own house, you know about septic tanks. Even they need a clean-out every couple of years. But people? We just get by, right. Wrong! We need to clean out, too! Yet fasting is a foreign concept even though it goes way back in history. Socrates, Buddha, and Jesus all fasted and all the major religions practice some fasting. But it is completely foreign to our modern society. Since we eat multiple times per day, for many with gaps sometimes of just a couple of hours, the concept of NOT eating can seem impossible. In actuality, it's quite natural. After the first 2-3 days, the nagging call of your digestive secretions stop and your "hunger" disappears. Now you're on "nature's operating table." Cleansing is the opposite side of eating. And yin needs yang. Juice fasting makes fasting manageable even for folks who need to work and cleanse at the same time.

Next time: How to start a juice fast. Or preview it here: [Juice Fasting & Detoxification](#).
For those who live in New England, join me for the [Post Holiday Cleanse](#).