

By an eHow Contributor

How to Create a Healthy Easter Basket

With childhood obesity on the rise, it's a smart idea to stock your kids' Easter baskets with healthy and fun alternatives to chocolate and candy. Follow these steps to create an Easter basket your children will love so much that they won't even miss the sweets.

Instructions:

1. Substitute healthy snacks for the sugary and chocolate-laden ones found in a traditional Easter basket. Give your children yogurt-covered raisins, dried fruit and homemade versions of the popular treats found in stores, which are much more nutritious for them.

2. Add books by your children's favorite authors, along with some fun Easter-themed bookmarks to their Easter baskets.

3. Fill the Easter basket with toys your kids can use while staying active outside, such as sidewalk chalk, bubbles, balls and sporting equipment.

4. Consider stocking the Easter basket with small gifts designed to encourage creativity in your children, such as paints, brushes, coloring books and crayons.

5. Arrange various kinds of seed packets with some gardening tools so your child can plant flowers or vegetables and watch them grow. Spring is the perfect time for your children to pick up gardening as a new hobby.

6. Pour healthy and homemade trail mix composed of a nutritious and low-sugar cereal, nuts, pretzels, bagel chips and a few jelly beans into plastic Easter eggs.



April is Alcohol Awareness Month Let's talk about... ***Alcohol and Nutrition***

It's easy to forget that you can drink as many calories as you eat. In fact, some drinks can have as many calories as a meal! Check out how many calories you can get from your favorite cocktail below. Remember to check the serving size and to add the calories from any juice or soda that is combined with the liquor:



Alcoholic drink	Calories
Beer, lite, 12 oz.	100
Beer, regular, 12 oz.	150
Gin, 1.5 oz.	110
Margarita, 4 oz.	270
Rum, 1.5 oz.	96
Vodka, 1.5 oz.	96
Whiskey, 1.5 oz.	105
Wine, dessert, sweet, 4 oz.	180

The next time you reach for a cocktail before your meal consider if it's worth the weight that you could be gaining from it. Research has shown a 20% increase in calories consumed at a meal when alcohol was consumed before the meal. There was a total caloric increase of 33% when the calories from the alcohol were added. Along with the increase in weight you can have an increased risk to your health because of where you gain the weight. A study of over 3,000 people showed that consuming elevated amounts of alcohol is associated with abdominal obesity in men. Many people joke about this being a "beer belly." Unfortunately, a "beer belly" puts you at an increased risk for type 2 diabetes, elevated blood lipids, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

The late-night munchies are often associated with a night of drinking. Have you ever realized that anytime that you drink alcohol you are hungrier or you end up eating more than usual?

Studies have shown that in the short term, alcohol stimulates food intake and can also increase feelings of hunger. Having your judgement impaired and stimulating your appetite is a recipe for failure if you are trying to follow a weight loss plan.

Regulating your calorie consumption is the key to successful weight loss and maintenance. A balanced diet will assist with curbing your hunger and providing the necessary nutrients for health and wellness. Alcohol is not considered necessary in a healthy diet. Instead, it provides a lot of calories and negatively impacts many aspects of your health. If you choose to consume alcohol, you will need to limit the quantity and frequency that you do so. You will also have to count the calories from alcohol to fit within your daily goal. You can limit calories in your drink by choosing those with less alcohol and limited amount of sweetened beverages. By using flavored seltzers or water, you will save many calories.

Here are some tips for calorie reduction when consuming alcohol:

- Have one nonalcoholic drink in between each alcoholic drink.
- Select light versions whenever possible. "Light" means fewer calories, but these products are not calorie- or alcohol-free, so you will still need to limit your intake.
- Always have food in your stomach before you have a drink.
- Keep water available to quench your thirst while you drink alcoholic beverages.
- Learn to sip your drink to make it last longer.