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THE CLEAN FOOD COACH

COACH NOTES: 5 Effective Eating Strategies for a Post-Holiday System Reboot

Okay, the party's over, tinsel's all picked out of the carpet and it's time to get serious about eating clean again. If you ate indulgently over the holidays, you are probably feeling the effects... a slight muzziness in your thinking, morning bloat, won't-quit cravings... you know what I'm talking about. The good news is that if your eating baseline is healthy it won't take much time to banish those belly blues and get you right back on track. Try any or all of these five simple tips to calm your cravings, restore digestive harmony and lean you out to pre-holiday hotness. Practice each strategy for a minimum of three days and until you feel your system returning to its former glory.

To support your body's natural pm flush: Leave at least 12 hours between pm and am eating and have 12 ounces of hot water with half a lemon first thing in the morning. For most people that will mean eating your evening meal at a reasonable hour and then closing down the kitchen until breakfast, say 6PM dinner and 7AM breakfast or pre-workout snack. Your digestion loses its fire as the sun drops lower in the sky until it hits its lowest ebb during sleep. Eating early will allow your evening meal to pass through your system before you actually lie down for bed and then your body can run its natural janitorial cycle throughout your sleep. Starting your morning by hydrating with water will help flush out the byproducts of the night's work. The lemon, though acid in the stomach, is alkalizing to your system, high in antioxidants and has liver-supportive benefits. According to Ayurveda, drinking water hot further stimulates toxin release. Ama is the Ayurvedic word for impurities and toxins left behind by improper digestion, and sipping plain hot water throughout the day helps to further purge it in a gentle and effective manner.

To curb a raging appetite and stimulate post-holiday fat loss: Have a smoothie for dinner. Most people eat their heaviest meal in the evening, so replacing it with a smoothie will automatically reduce the overall calorie load of the day. In addition, smoothies are in liquid form, enabling them to run more quickly and easily through the digestive process. This will prime your system for its natural pm cleanse and for the awakening of appetite earlier in the day, when your body will naturally burn more calories. You may feel some hunger after "dinner" for a day or two, but that will disappear if you get enough calories during your breakfast and lunch. Pushing through a little pm hunger will also help your system readjust to lighter eating, quickly and efficiently weaning you off of holiday over-eating

To help clear out sluggish bowels, increase micronutrients and reduce total calorie consumption: Make half your breakfast and lunch raw fruit, veg and herbs. The vital freshness of raw produce will feel like a balm to a system that's been inundated with rich fats, sweets and heavy eating in general throughout the holidays. The extra water and fiber in uncooked veg and fruits will help rehydrate your system and act like a broom for sluggish bowels. The extra chewing required will slow the pace of your eating and further reduce the calories you consume. Try to include the following fruits and veggies:

- Rich in glutathione or flavonoids that stimulate its production –excellent for detoxing the liver pathway: dill, onion, garlic, avocado, green leafy veggies.
- Natural diuretics: dandelion root (for tea) and fresh greens (to a lesser effect), green tea (also high in antioxidants).
- High in betalains (anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal, liver-supportive): beets and goji berries

To help stabilize your blood sugar, cravings and appetite: Have a healthy serving of lean protein at every meal and snack. Regular servings of protein will fuel, ground and prime your system for fat burning while helping to stabilize your blood sugar levels. Keep it lean because holiday fare is quite high in fats, not all of them clean, and your liver will benefit from a temporary spate of lean eating (few days to a week). Choose primarily from clean fish and other seafood, poultry, bison, beans and whey or rice protein powder. During your reboot, think "more fiber than fat"

To further calm cravings and reduce holiday-induced inflammation: Cut out all alcohol, sugar and grain products, especially flour-based. This one may be the toughest of them all, especially if you celebrated with a lot of these types of treats. With the sugar foods, the more you eat, the more you want. And if you're sugar-sensitive, eating even small amounts will keep your cravings for them lively. The best strategy is going cold turkey: cut them all out completely until your cravings go back to their pre-holiday level. Then you can decide what and how much you can safely re-introduce.