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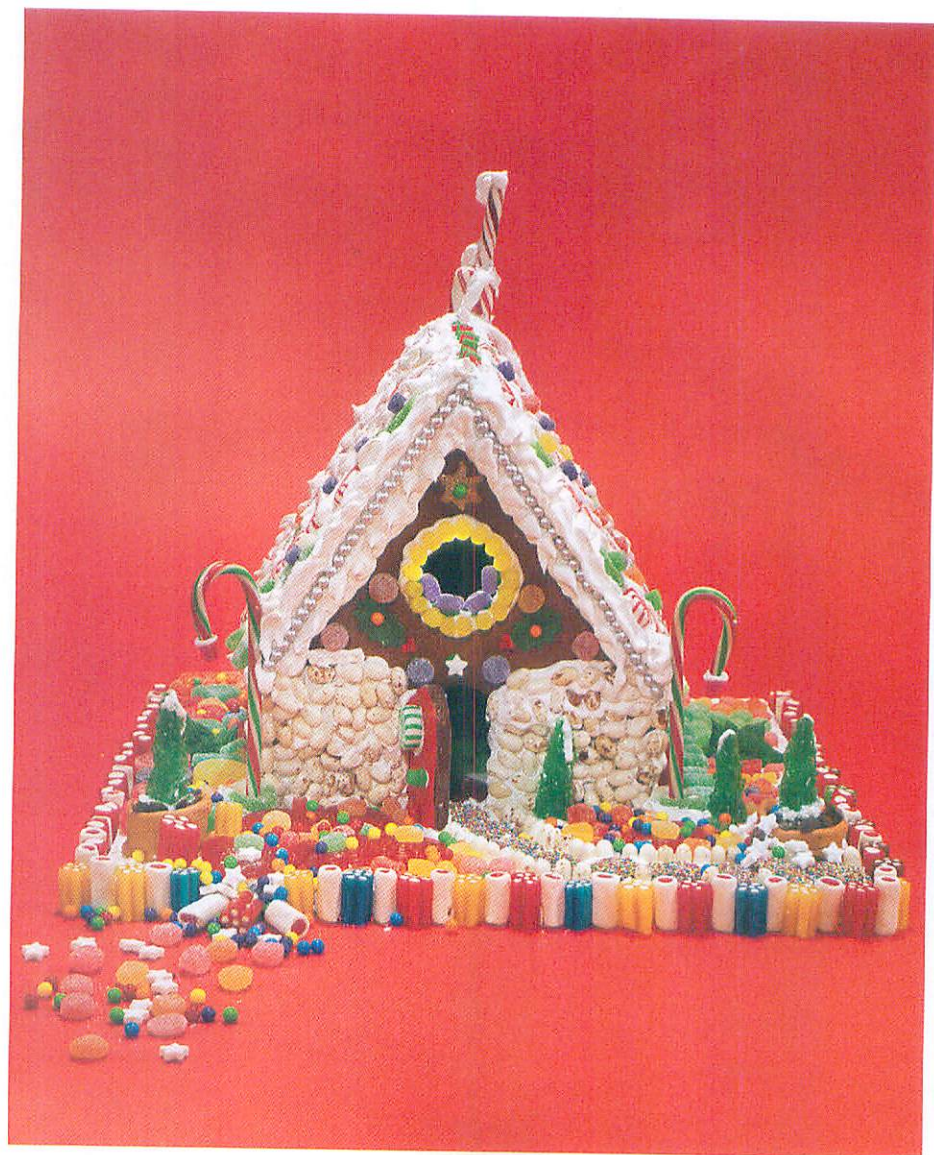


## 17 ways to party (and stay hearty)

Don't believe the hype: You can enjoy a little holiday indulgence without fa-la-lal-ing apart. Here's some advice to help you make merry in moderation.







erratic heartbeats—dubbed “holiday heart syndrome.” It is more common among people who usually aren’t heavy drinkers but drink in excess for a short time. “Alcohol may be toxic to enough cardiac cells that it disrupts the coordination required to maintain a normal heart rate,” says Kenneth Mukamal, an internist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, in Boston. “Women should have no more than three drinks on any occasion and seven per week,” says Michael Weaver, an associate professor of internal medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, in Richmond. “So a woman can have up to three drinks

in a night and go out two nights, but that’s it for the week—or else the chances of problems go way up.”

**KEEP IT ON THE ROCKS.** Melting ice dilutes a cocktail and creates more liquid. So order your drink on the rocks to try to avoid a quick buzz—and to sip longer before a refill. Use soda water as a mixer for liquor (a cocktail with liquor and club soda is only about 100 calories), and don’t be ashamed to add ice cubes to bubbly. In France, it’s called a *piscine*. *Très chic.*

**PUT A CORK IN IT EARLY.** Alcohol may help you to conk out quickly; the problem comes when it starts to wear off. The period in which your body is metaboliz-

ing the alcohol is when sleep is disrupted. You may wake up frequently in the middle of the night (even if you don’t remember doing so) and miss out on restorative rest. The best strategy is to allow time for the alcohol levels in your body to drop before going to sleep; at the very least, retire your flute several hours before bedtime.

## **A to ZZZs of sleep deprivation**

### **DON’T LET LATE NIGHTS MAKE YOU FAT.**

“People who sleep less over time tend to be heavier,” says Lawrence Epstein, the chief medical officer of the Sleep Health-Centers, in Brighton, Massachusetts. But it doesn’t take long for the cycle to start. “If you pull one all-nighter or miss a few hours each night over a week, your body releases hormones that prompt eating and weight gain,” says Epstein.

### **USE THE WEEKEND TO CATCH UP.**

Most of us have sleep debt: the difference between the number of hours we need every night (which varies per person) and how many we get. If you feel best after seven hours a night and you get five for three nights in a row during a busy week, you have a sleep debt of six hours (two missing hours for three nights). Erasing that debt requires you to get six extra hours over the course of a few days, but they don’t have to be consecutive, says Epstein. David F. Dinges, Ph.D., the chief of the division of sleep and chronobiology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, conducted a study in which participants were restricted to about four hours of sleep for five consecutive nights, then allowed to sleep for 10 hours or more on the sixth night. The researchers found that after the recovery night, participants regained some of their previous levels of alertness and ability to concentrate. So while you should focus on eliminating your sleep debt com-



pletely, just one good snooze (a few hours more than you normally need) can give you a fresher start.

#### **WATCH OUT FOR HIDDEN CAFFEINE.**

Think hot cocoa is a soothing way to end a winter's night? Hold on to your marshmallows. Chocolate, even the powdered kind, contains caffeine, as do many over-the-counter pain medicines that you might pop at night to get a head start on a hangover. Excedrin Extra-Strength Caplets, for example, contain 65 milligrams of caffeine; by comparison, the average cup of coffee contains 50 to 100.

**SKIP THE SLIDERS.** Foods that are high in fat or protein require your body to work harder at digestion. When your body is busy breaking down mini hamburgers, your sleep is more likely to be hampered. Watch the clock; an early cocktail party is the perfect time to snack on something more substantial. As the night wears on, taper off. Or, if you're still hungry, have some complex carbohydrates, like whole-wheat crackers or a handful of crudités.

### **beating the blues**

#### **DON'T ASSUME THAT THIS IS THE MOST DEPRESSING TIME OF THE YEAR.**

Contrary to popular belief, depression isn't more common during the holidays. In fact, suicide rates in the United States are actually lowest in December, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "This may be a result of more social interaction, which has been found to enhance happiness," says Caroline Adams Miller, the author of *Creating Your Best Life*. But that doesn't mean that you're immune to the holiday blues, especially when you're missing a family member or stressed-out by the in-laws. Make plans with friends if your family is far away—or, on the flip side, opt out of events if your schedule is overwhelming. "You don't have to be a type E personality—everything to everyone," says Ronald Nathan, a psychologist in Albany.



**CONSIDER A SUPPLEMENT.** Is there a magic pill that will cure the blues? Of course not. But some research shows that omega-3 fatty acids may relieve depression; other research has found that vitamin D may improve mood. Add a daily supplement of omega-3 or vitamin D to your diet. Or increase your intake of vitamin D-fortified milk or foods rich in omega-3s, such as fish, flaxseed, and walnuts.

#### **TAKE FACEBOOK WITH A GRAIN**

**OF SALT.** You've seen the status updates: "Hope Santa can find us in ARUBA!" or "Mmm, homemade cider, kids making cookies, life is good." And you know what? Those people have bad days, too.

Remember: Most people put their best self forward on Facebook and Twitter. Don't compare your life with those dreamy-sounding posts.

**MAKE PLANS FOR JANUARY.** "If you have social events coming up with people you like, you'll be upbeat about what's to come," says Alison Ratner, a clinical social worker in Atlanta. Plan a weekend getaway or an Oscar-nominated-movie marathon. Or, ahem, if you did gain that holiday pound, might we suggest a jogging club? Happy New Year!

—additional reporting by  
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