



## WHAT ARE YOU EATING? #4

# MINCE PIE

Nutritionist Emma Wells lifts the pastry lid on your favourite festive snack and wraps up everything you need to repair the damage

### TOAST A LOWER CANCER RISK

Two mince pies with brandy cream give you around 0.15mg of salt, a third of your daily allowance. Increased salt intake means a higher risk of stomach cancer, but the good news is the stuffing on your Christmas dinner plate will help undo the damage. Scientists at the University of North Carolina found **eating onions, leeks, garlic and chives halves your risk of cancer in your mid-section.** Alternatively, wash the pie back with a glass of mulled wine. Studies show the spices and resveratrol inhibit cancer cell growth.

### AVOID A BUTTER BLOW-OUT

Eat all the pies and you risk looking more like Mrs Claus than Santa. The brandy butter contains alcohol along with 11.9g of fat per 100g. These increase oestrogen levels, which can lead to 'man boobs' over time. To prevent this, increase your intake of quercetin, a compound found in many red-coloured foods including tomatoes, red onions and even the cherries in your Christmas cake. St George's Hospital Medical School found **quercetin inhibits the enzyme that turns testosterone into oestrogen,** keeping you happily flat-chested.

### SNACK YOUR WAY PAINLESS

Feeling iffy at this time of year isn't solely down to the increased frequency of winter socialising. The dried fruit in your mince pies contains sulphur dioxide as a preservative, which can lead to nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhoea when you really gorge. To quell those feelings, try snacking on ginger biscuits or have a cup of ginger tea before you go to bed. **The fiery root has anti-emetic properties, which will help to stop you feeling nauseous...** unless you've been up late watching a rerun of *Ghost*.

### CURRY FESTIVE FAVOUR

High fructose corn syrup, found in the candied peel mix put into the mince pies, has been linked to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. Earlier this year, researchers associated it with cirrhosis or scarring in the liver. **To reverse these effects, schedule in a couple of curries** over the holidays. Research in the journal *Gut* found that active ingredients in turmeric, used in many Indian and Malaysian dishes, eases the liver damage that leads to cirrhosis. You'll be sick of turkey by the 27th anyway... ►



If you pick this mix  
we've got a plan to  
keep you jolly



Men's Health turns its force on the Phantom Mince-ace



## WASH AWAY ARTERY FILLERS

Each pie and dollop of cream contains 9.6g saturated fat, almost half your RDA. This raises your cholesterol, increasing your risk of cardiovascular disease and dementia, according to a study at the University of Kuopio in Finland. But, Christmas comes with a solution. Cranberries contain vitamin E, which slows dementia and, according to scientists at Laval University in Canada, one glass of cranberry juice a day increases the level of HDL cholesterol (the good one) by 8.6%.

## CALM YOUR GUT FEELING

Glacé cherries in mince pies contain citric acid, a common preservative found in many processed foods. A sensitivity to citric acid can leave you experiencing unpleasant bloating, stomach cramps and a nasty rash. If your stomach is rumbling, opt for the smoked salmon with avocado starter on Christmas Day. This contains plenty of zinc and vitamin B6, two nutrients required to increase stomach acid and aid the digestive process.

## ENJOY A BIT OF THE ROUGHAGE

There are traces of fibre in your mince pie but you'd need to eat 26 of them to hit your daily 18g quota – that would rope in over 6,000 calories. To avoid a shortfall in your daily fibre, and an increased risk of haemorrhoids, have a fibre-full winter breakfast with porridge oats, prunes and cinnamon. Researchers at the University of Birmingham found this gives you a 7.5-fold decrease in the odds of suffering haemorrhoids compared to skipping breakfast.

## SKATE THE ISSUE OF KCALS

One mince pie with brandy cream gives you 243kcal, closing in on a tenth of a man's daily needs. To enjoy them guilt-free, try some snow sports. The calories are easily burned off with 40 minutes of downhill skiing. If you're not on the piste, 30 minutes ice skating or 1 hour 20 minutes of manic shopping will shift them. More than half the damage comes from the cream, so enjoy two pies for the price of one by foregoing the dollop. Alternatively, swap it for natural yoghurt to save over 50kcal.

## BEAT XMAS HEADACHES

On top of the family arguments, the 15.7g of sugar in each mince pie can exacerbate your festive headaches. The white stuff can destabilise blood sugar, and cause migraines, says research in The Lancet. To clear the neural snowstorm, have a bowl of Christmas pud. The fruit contains magnesium, 600mg of which will reduce migraine frequency by 41%, University of Munich research found. It's also been found to reduce mood swings – so you won't pulverise the shopping-centre Santa.

## THE MEANING OF PIE Crunch the numbers and the damage that builds up with your festive pie

**15.7**

...grams of sugar, increasing your chances of Christmas headaches

**Your plan** Mixed fruit will clear your head of migraines and that burning wish to thump your fellow shopper

**243**

...calories in every pie with brandy cream; almost a tenth of your RDA

**Your plan** Burn off the damage with 1 hour 20 minutes of Christmas shopping or a new year ski holiday

**0.075**

...grams of salt, increasing your risk of developing stomach cancer

**Your plan** Christmas stuffing, and a glass of mulled wine, will reverse the effects of seasonal indulgence

**11.9**

...grams of animal fat, increasing your chance of getting man boobs

**Your plan** Red foods – cherries, grapes – contain an enzyme that will keep your bust in check **MH**