Summer abounds with fresh fruits and vegetables, but when the temperature starts to fall, we turn our attention to our favorite foods perfect for football games, tailgating, fireside meals and, if you aren’t careful, weight gain.

Fall offers all kinds of delicious and nutritious foods, from apples to root vegetables, but we have a knack for taking healthy foods and making them decadently rich. When smothered in cream sauce, baked in pie crust, sautéed in butter or topped with cheese, these foods can go from good to bad.

**Avoid Weight Gain Before the Holidays**

Think ahead. With the holidays right around the corner, temptations will only get worse as you get closer to the end of the year.

All it takes is an extra 100 calories per day to pack on 10 pounds a year. Year after year, the weight adds up and those added pounds get harder to lose. Even though cooler weather lets you hide under more clothing, the best strategy is not to gain the extra weight.

This doesn’t mean you have to deprive yourself of your fall favorites, but consider making a few simple changes to avoid packing on extra pounds before the holidays.

**Game Day**

Those game-day favorites, served on a tailgate or in front of the television is a good place to start. If you’re a typical sports fan, you could find yourself on the couch for hours at a time eating fan favorite hot dogs, pizza, wings, ribs, sausages and washing it down with plenty of beer – the perfect formula for weight gain.

To cut back on mindless eating and drinking at home, try to wait until half time to serve the buffet. Serve up more nutritious, lower calorie options such as: light beer, water and diet drinks; baked whole grain tortilla chips with black bean salsa and hummus; baked chicken fingers with barbecue sauce; grilled turkey sausage and honey mustard dip; fruit and veggies with low-fat dips; and sushi or shrimp cocktail.
Most Fattening Foods of Fall

So what exactly are the diet-spoilers to watch out for this season? Here are a few fall foods that can really pack a caloric punch and tips to shave calories:

**Cream soups and hearty stews.** Cream of broccoli cheese soup and beef goulash may seem like perfect fall foods, but be careful. Soups and stews sound nutritious, but if they are loaded with cream, cheese or high-fat meat, they are also loaded with calories. Serving them in a bread bowl, atop rice, noodles or dunking big portions of bread into them can put even healthy soups or stews over the top.

Limit these options, instead choose broth and vegetable based soups and stews to fill you up for fewer calories.

**Root vegetables.** While many are super-nutritious, root vegetables can quadruple in calories when you cream them, fry them or mix them with cheese, cream, butter, canned soups or crispy bacon. A sweet potato casserole can easily have 500 calories per serving – 400 more than a simple roasted sweet potato.

Shave calories by eating root veggies oven-roasted or grilled. A roasted sweet potato is so delicious it really needs nothing, so try a sprinkle of cinnamon. If you just can’t pass on the mashed potatoes, skip the gravy and keep the portion to 1/2 cup.

**Seasonal beverages.** Hot toddies may keep you warm at night, but these hot drinks, along with hot chocolate, pumpkin-spice lattes, eggnog and apple cider are a quick and easy way to take in lots of extra calories. A 16-oz. pumpkin spice latte with 2% milk and whipped cream packs 380 calories.

Beverages generally satisfy thirst and don’t affect how much you eat so tread carefully when choosing your drinks.

Try a hot cup of green or flavored tea, rich with antioxidants and calorie-free. Avoid alcohol, but if you choose to drink, opt for light beer or wine spritzers, and limit yourself to one or two.

**Apple, pecan, pumpkin and sweet potato pies.** These fall favorites start with healthy ingredients such as heart-healthy nuts or antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, but they also include high-calorie ingredients. Rich, buttery pie crusts, sweet fillings and the customary whipped cream or ice cream topping make these pies decadent and full of calories.

Pass on the crust, add a dollop of light whipped topping and serve yourself only a sliver to enjoy these delicious desserts without lots of extra calories.

**Stuffing.** There are so many different versions of stuffing but most contain high-fat ingredients such as sausage and butter. And the calories keep coming when the stuffing is served with a ladle or two of gravy.

You can make a low-fat stuffing using fruits, vegetables and chicken stock, but you still need to keep the portion small and try not to smother it in gravy.

**Macaroni and cheese.** It’s an all-time favorite comfort food for both kids and adults, but it can wreak havoc with your diet. Today’s versions include several cheeses and extra ingredients such as high-fat meats or sausage.

Modify the recipe by using a low-fat cheese, low-fat milk and add in some veggies like pureed butternut squash or cauliflower instead of meat to improve the nutritional profile that still tastes great.

Do yourself a favor this fall and make a few small changes in your food choices and/or preparation and delight in the calorie savings and great results on the scale.