

Carol Rees Parrish, M.S., R.D., Series Editor

## Celebrating the Holidays: A “Fresh” Look at Holiday Foods for Those with Dysphagia



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**Patients frequently need liquid or smooth consistency diets for a variety of reasons. Standard practice is for clinicians to recommend the use of commercial liquid nutrition shakes, pudding and ice cream to meet these needs. But for some, the desire for more flavor variety, lower cost, or the concern over ingredients found in many commercial products motivates them to seek “whole food” alternatives. In this article we provide recipes with a seasonal appeal for those who have difficulty swallowing the normal consistency holiday fare.**

### INTRODUCTION

**F**or a variety of reasons, many patients experience dysphagia, or difficulty swallowing, and may therefore require liquids or soft consistency foods to meet their nutrition requirements. Dysphagia may result from a disease process, surgery, trauma, dental work, or congenital problem affecting any aspect of the swallowing process from the mouth to the esophagus. Some of the more common reasons include mechanical issues such as cancers in the mouth or throat and neurological issues caused by stroke, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), or Parkinson’s disease. In addition, patients who have undergone esophageal surgeries and/or stent placements often require a period of altered food consistency. Softer

food choices can make manipulating foods in the mouth easier and shorten meal times, while reducing the risk of aspiration.

Numerous specialists are involved in determining the appropriate course of action for patients with dysphagia. Speech-language pathologists often direct oropharyngeal dysphagia recommendations, while gastroenterologists and radiologists usually manage esophageal dysphagia. The Registered Dietitian’s job is to translate these recommendations into actual foods, taking into consideration the nutritional adequacy of a limited consistency diet.

People with dysphagia go through profound adjustments in their lives. The dietary changes that are imposed, in particular, often create a feeling of loss related to the social aspects of eating that are so important in our lives. This can result in a decrease in intake that leads to significant, and sometimes severe, weight loss. Without appropriate intervention, such a cycle will negatively impact quality of life, and health.

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Below is a collection of festive holiday recipes and how-to tips to prepare soft, moist foods, so that people living with dysphagia will once again be able to experience the joy associated with holiday eating. We think these recipes are so tasty, they will delight all of those around the holiday table. Bon Appétit!

### **Sensational Holiday Recipes**

The holidays are associated with the savory entrees, side dishes and soups we all know and love. While any favorite meal can be processed to meet swallowing consistency needs, we offer the following recipes that may become some of your new favorites.

#### **SIDE DISHES**

##### **Carrot Soufflé**

16 ounce bag frozen carrots  
5 eggs  
2 Tablespoons sugar  
2 Tablespoons flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon vanilla  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup melted butter  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon nutmeg  
4 teaspoons brown sugar  
1 Tablespoon melted butter

Steam carrots until tender. Blend until smooth. Add eggs and blend well. Add sugar, flour, baking powder, vanilla, butter and seasonings. Blend until smooth. Pour into 2 quart pan, coated with cooking spray. Combine brown sugar, butter and nuts. Sprinkle evenly over carrot mixture. Bake at 325 degrees for about 45 minutes.

Recipe from Carol Rees Parrish, MS, RD

##### **Butternut Squash and Pear Puree**

1 butternut squash, halved, seeds removed  
2 pears, sliced, seeds removed

Roast squash on cookie sheet at 375 degrees for 50 minutes or until tender. 20 minutes into baking squash, add pears. When both are soft, remove from the oven and cool until able to handle. Scoop the butternut squash from the peeling and place with pears in a blender or food processor, process until desired consistency is achieved. Add butter and cinnamon to taste.

For stove top method, remove peeling and seeds from squash and pears. Chop both into cubes. Add to pot with 1 - 2 cups water (just enough to cook without burning). Cook until soft, about 30 to 35 minutes. Puree and season with butter and cinnamon to taste. Note: may substitute apple for a pear.

Thanks Mom.

##### **Holiday Sweet Potato Casserole**

2 15-ounce canned yams  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup granulated sugar or brown sugar  
1 cup evaporated milk  
3 Tablespoons butter, melted  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 large eggs  
**Topping**  
1 cup marshmallow creme  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup all-purpose flour  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup packed brown sugar  
 $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt  
2 Tablespoons melted butter

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place canned yams into a large bowl. Add sugar, evaporated milk, 3 Tablespoons butter,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, and vanilla. Beat with a mixer at medium speed until smooth. Add eggs; beat well. Pour mixture into 13 x 9 baking dish coated with cooking spray. For topping, combine flour, butter, brown sugar and salt. Sprinkle over mixture. Dot with marshmallow creme and bake for 15-20 minutes.

Recipe from the authors

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Consider these 2 options:

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#### Curried Butternut Squash and Apple Soup

- 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, large dice, or 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon Madras curry powder
- 1 Tablespoon Ginger, freshly grated, or 1 teaspoon dried, ground ginger
- 2 medium Butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and cubed
- 4 cups organic vegetable broth
- ¼ - ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 Tablespoon peanut or almond butter

Heat oil in a 3 quart saucepan over medium high heat. Sauté onions until golden. Add curry powder and ginger, stir with onions for about 30 seconds. Add squash and apple, toss until coated with oil and spices. Add 3 cups of broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer until squash and apples are tender. Puree small batches in the blender until smooth and creamy. Blend in nut butter. Add all back to the pot. Add more broth, if soup is too thick. Reheat, taste and adjust seasonings.

Adapted by Laura Pole from recipe by Rich LaMarita.

#### Pumpkin Soup - Begin with this base for your soup:

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil in your pot
- ½ – 1 small onion, diced (~ ½ cup)
- 1 clove garlic, smashed and minced
- 1 stalk of celery, diced
- 1 – 2 carrots, diced

Sauté the above ingredients until translucent on medium heat for about 10 - 15 minutes.

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- 1 15-ounce can pumpkin puree
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 dash of cinnamon
- 2 dashes nutmeg
- ½ cup cream or milk (2% or whole)
- 4 – 6 fresh sage leaves, diced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Add 1 can pumpkin puree, 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth, 1 dash cinnamon and 2 dashes nutmeg. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Using immersion blender, blend until smooth. Then add ½ cup cream or whole or 2 % milk and blend. Then add 4 - 6 fresh sage leaves, diced, along with salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes and serve.

Recipes from the authors.

#### ENTREES

Take advantage of the family traditions on your table and create a dish that may surprise you. Focus on the wonderful flavors and be creative.

#### Turkey Dinner Puree

- ½ cup cooked carrots or peas
- ½ cup mashed potatoes or stuffing
- 3 – 4 ounces roasted turkey (chopped)
- 1 Tablespoon butter

Blend above with 3-4 ounces of thin gravy to desired consistency. OR:

- 3 – 4 ounces roasted turkey (chopped)
- ½ cup canned cranberry sauce
- 1 Tablespoon butter

Blend with 3-4 ounces of turkey gravy, thinned to desired consistency. OR:

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3 – 4 ounces of prime rib (chopped)  
1 Tablespoon butter

Blend with 3-4 ounces of beef gravy, thinned to desired consistency

Authors developed with Renee Bricker, Speech Pathologist, UVA

### In the mood for a bowl of warm soup, but missing your favorites?

Canned or homemade soups can be pureed. Those that may work the best are potato soup, split pea, lentil, bean and vegetable soups such as Minestrone. You may also consider adding protein powder, dry milk powder, milk or cream, or nut butters when blending for additional protein and creaminess.

### Smoky Butternut Squash Sauce with Pasta, Beans and Broccoli

¼ cup raw cashews, soaked  
1 large butternut squash  
1-2 cup broccoli, chopped fine  
1 can white beans, drained and rinsed  
1 package mini shell or macaroni pasta  
¾ cup water  
2 garlic cloves, peeled  
1 Tablespoon lemon juice  
½ teaspoon onion powder  
½ teaspoon smoked paprika  
¼ teaspoon chili powder  
1 teaspoon sea salt  
⅛ teaspoon liquid smoke  
Hot sauce

Place cashews in a small bowl, cover with water. Soak overnight or at least 3-4 hours until soft and plump. Drain, rinse before use. Prepare squash by roasting in the oven at 425 degrees on a baking sheet lined

with parchment paper. Drizzle with oil and sprinkle with salt. Roast for 30 – 40 minutes until fork tender. Add cashews, water, garlic, lemon juice, onion powder, paprika, chili powder, beans and 2 cup of cooked squash into a high speed blender. Blend until smooth. Add salt, liquid smoke and hot sauce to taste, blend again. Cook pasta according to package directions. Steam broccoli until fork tender. Add drained pasta to the pot, pour on desired amount of sauce and stir to combine. Stir in cooked broccoli. Warm over medium heat and serve immediately. Leftover sauce can be stored in an airtight container for up to 1 week in the fridge.

Modified from Recipe provided by Mary Lou Perry, MS, RD, CDE

### SMOOTHIES AND SHAKES

#### Peppermint Pattie Smoothie

1 cup vanilla soy milk  
1-2 Tablespoons cocoa powder  
1 handful spinach (try it, it is delicious AND nutritious!)  
½ cup dry milk  
½ cup plain Greek yogurt  
½ cup mint choc chip ice cream  
1 small banana  
4 - 6 ice cubes

Place milk, cocoa powder, spinach, yogurt and ice cream in the blender. Blend until combined. Then add small banana and ice cubes, blend until smooth.

Recipe from the authors

#### Apple Pie in a Glass

1 cup applesauce  
½ teaspoon cinnamon  
1 Tablespoon brown sugar  
1 cup vanilla ice cream  
½ teaspoon vanilla

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Place above ingredients in a blender, blend until smooth and enjoy.

Recipe from the authors

#### Pumpkin Cheesecake Smoothie

½ cup canned pumpkin puree  
½ cup plain Greek yogurt  
2 ounces cream cheese  
¼ cup orange juice  
2 Tablespoons agave or honey  
⅛ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice  
⅛ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon vanilla  
1 medium frozen banana  
½ cup crushed ice

Place first 8 ingredients in a blender and blend until combined. Then add ice and frozen banana and blend until smooth. Enjoy! Optional: top with whipped cream and a drizzle of caramel syrup.

Developed by the authors with help from Lisa Davis, ALS clinic

#### Peanut Butter Chocolate Smoothie

1 cup chocolate almond, soy, or cow's milk  
2 Tablespoons creamy peanut butter  
2.5 ounce container baby food prunes  
¼ teaspoon cinnamon  
½ frozen banana  
4 ice cubes or ½ cup crushed ice

Combine milk, peanut butter, prunes and cinnamon in a blender; process until smooth. Add frozen banana and crushed ice; process again until blended.

Recipe adapted from Mary Lou Perry, MS, RD, CDE

#### SNACKS AND DESSERTS

The following snacks/desserts make managing dysphagia not only delicious, but nutritious too. Adding whipped cream or chocolate syrup helps increase the calories.

#### Pumpkin Pudding Treat

1 cup vanilla prepared pudding (may use 2 4-ounce pudding packs)  
¼ cup canned or cooked fresh pumpkin  
¼ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice  
¼ teaspoon vanilla

Add ingredients to a dish and blend with wire whisk until combined. Best served chilled. Even better with whipped topping.

For a whipped dessert, follow above recipe, then add 1 cup whipped cream or topping using spatula to blend. This is best consumed after refrigerating for a few hours, but not required. Top with additional whipped topping and add a dash of pumpkin pie spice and enjoy.

Recipe from Authors

#### Egg Nog Custard

Cooking spray  
2 ½ cups Egg Nog  
½ cup sugar  
4 eggs  
Fresh grated Nutmeg

Combine all ingredients using a mixer. Spray ramekins or small oven safe dishes with cooking spray. Place ramekins or oven safe dishes in a pan with 1 inch of warm water. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes, until the center is almost set (center will be soft but set as it cools). Cool for 2 hours, place in refrigerator. Serve cold with freshly grated nutmeg over top.

Recipe from Authors

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#### Grandma Shirley Rees’ “Pumpkin Pie” Custard

1 15-ounce can pumpkin puree  
3/4 cup dark brown sugar  
2 eggs  
5 teaspoons butter, melted  
1 Tablespoon dark molasses  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/3 teaspoon ginger  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3/4 cup 2% milk

Combine pumpkin, sugar, and the remaining ingredients in the order given. Place in a 9” pie pan sprayed with cooking spray. Bake in 450 degree oven for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and continue baking for 30 minutes or until filling is firm and has a glossy, golden brown top, about 55 minutes. Add fresh whipped cream as desired.

Recipe from Carol Rees Parrish, MS, RD

#### Spiced Pumpkin Fudge

2 cups granulated sugar  
1 cup light brown sugar  
3/4 cup butter  
2/3 cup evaporated milk  
1/2 cup canned pumpkin puree  
2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice  
2 cups white chocolate morsels  
1 jar (7 oz.) marshmallow creme  
1 cup chopped pecans (optional)  
1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Boil the sugars, evaporated milk, pumpkin, butter and spice in a medium saucepan for 10-12 minutes,

stirring constantly. Quickly stir in chocolate morsels, marshmallow creme, nuts and vanilla. Stir vigorously for 1 minute until morsels are melted. Put into a 13 x 9 baking pan that is lined with foil. Cool for 2 hours. Keep refrigerated.

Recipe from Jean Sheard, Volunteer and baker extraordinaire in UVAHS ALS Clinic

#### Crockpot Applesauce Goodness

8 medium apples (your choice, peeled and cored)  
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon (or more to taste)  
1/4 cup brown sugar or agave

Place the above ingredients in crock pot. On the low setting, cook for 6 hours. Use an immersion blender until smooth or mash to a chunkier consistency if desired.

Recipe from the authors

#### Tofu Chocolate Pudding

12 1/3 ounce silken tofu (drained)  
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1/4 cup water  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla  
2 Tablespoons nut butter (optional)

Place all ingredients in blender until silky smooth.

Recipe from Renee Bricker, Speech Pathologist, UVA

#### SUMMARY

The holidays bring opportunities to enjoy a variety of festive dishes. With some planning, those living with dysphagia can continue to enjoy the celebrations (and food!) that so often accompany the holiday season. Hopefully, these recipes will allow your patients to feel more included in their traditional family festive food fares and more fully enjoy their holiday season. ■