food life

CAROLINE PAYNE

A FREE GUIDE

FOR BUSY WOMEN IN MIDLIFE

The Holiday *Survival Guide*

Keep stress in check, protect your sleep, and enjoy your table this season. No diets. Nothing off the table.



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BSC FOOD & NUTRITION · CERTIFIED HEALTH COACH

CREATOR OF THE HABIT MASTERY METHOD™

Habits that hold. By design, not discipline.



WELCOME

Hi, I'm *Caroline.*

I help busy professional women eat well through midlife without turning it into another full-time job.

The holidays are some of my favorite weeks of the year: the cooking, the people, the food that tastes like home. They can also be the weeks when sleep slips, stress climbs, and the routines that usually carry us quietly fall away.

This guide isn't a diet, and there's nothing on a forbidden list. It's six small, practical ways to look after yourself while you enjoy the season. Pick one. Then, if it helps, pick another.

I'm a certified health coach with a BSc in Food and Nutrition, an IIN-Certified Hormone Health Specialist, and the creator of the Habit Mastery Method™. For more than a decade, I've helped women build habits that hold, anchored to the rhythms their lives already run on.

With warmth,
Caroline

The season can be wonderful, *and a lot.*

Christmas, New Year, and every celebration in between bring joy. They also bring more to plan, more to cook, more to attend, and less time for you. You don't need to do everything in this guide. Small, steady habits will carry you further than a big promise you make in January.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Before you start: plan ahead, and ask for help	4
1 · Protect your sleep	5
2 · Keep moving, a little at a time	6
3 · Go gently with drinks	7
4 · Fill half your plate with vegetables	8
Your Holiday Home Plate (a page to fill in)	9
5 · Set kind boundaries	10
6 · Ease the money pressure	11
Your next step	12

> *Choose the one tip that would make the biggest difference this week. Start there.*

BEFORE YOU START

Plan ahead, *and ask for help.*

Last-minute stress usually starts with a plan that lives only in your head. Write it down, then share it. If you're doing most of the cooking and hosting yourself, support isn't a luxury. It's part of the plan.

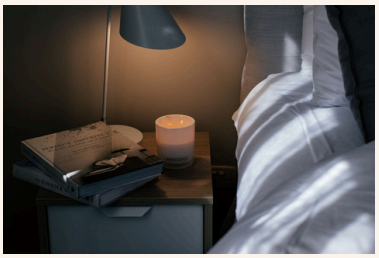
TRY THIS

- ✓ Make one list for the season: meals, gatherings, and gifts. Circle only what truly needs you.
- ✓ Hand off the rest. Ask guests to bring a dish, and let someone else own dessert or the drinks.
- ✓ Cook ahead where you can. Many side dishes and sauces taste even better made the day before.
- ✓ Keep ten minutes a day for yourself: a walk, prayer, journaling, or a quiet cup of tea. Put it in your calendar like a meeting.

Savor the small things

The smell of something on the stove, a laugh across the table, a gift you know someone will love. Pausing to notice a good moment is one of the simplest ways to feel less rushed.





01 TIP 1 OF 6

Protect *your sleep.*

Late nights, travel, and a fuller calendar can chip away at sleep. And after a short night, everything feels harder, including choosing what to eat. Sleep isn't a reward for getting everything done. It's what helps you get through the season well.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Keep your wake-up time steady,** even after a late night. Your body likes a rhythm.
- ✓ **Have your last coffee or black tea by early afternoon.**
- ✓ **Build a short wind-down:** dim the lights, put your phone to bed first, and read a few pages.
- ✓ **Enjoy a drink if you like, but don't count on it to help you sleep.** Alcohol tends to make sleep lighter later in the night.

WHEN TO CHECK IN

If you're waking most nights, having night sweats, or someone mentions loud snoring, talk with your clinician. Those are worth a closer look.

Your small step: pick one wake-up time and keep it all week.

02 TIP 2 OF 6



Keep moving, *a little at a time.*

You don’t need a full workout to feel the benefit. Movement helps with stress, mood, and sleep, and small amounts add up. When your usual routine slips, the goal isn’t to make up for it. It’s simply to keep your body in the habit.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Take a 10-minute walk after a big meal.** Invite someone along. It’s often where the best conversations happen.
- ✓ **Use what’s around you:** a few flights of stairs, a stretch while the kettle boils, or dancing in the kitchen while the food cooks.
- ✓ **Keep a shorter version of a routine you love,** like 15 minutes of yoga or a resistance band at home, instead of stopping altogether.
- ✓ **Move earlier in the day** if evenings are full. A morning walk is harder to cancel than an evening class.

On your busiest days, the smallest version still counts. Five minutes is a win, not a failure.

Your small step: one 10-minute walk after your biggest meal of the week.



03

TIP 3 OF 6

Go gently *with drinks.*

There's nothing wrong with raising a glass. Alcohol can, though, unsettle your sleep and leave you feeling more on edge as it wears off, which is the opposite of what most of us want in a busy season. A little planning lets you enjoy the celebration and still feel like yourself the next morning.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Alternate each drink with water or a sparkling, alcohol-free option.
- ✓ Decide your plan before the party, not halfway through it.
- ✓ Bring a festive drink you love that happens to be alcohol-free: sparkling water with citrus and fresh ginger, or a chilled hibiscus tea.
- ✓ Eat before and while you drink. A real meal makes for a steadier evening.

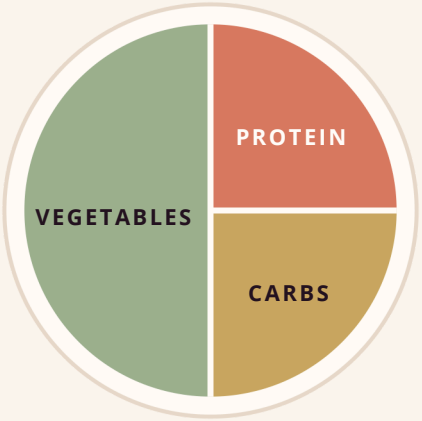
If you take medication, check with your pharmacist or clinician about alcohol. Some medicines don't mix well with it.

Your small step: a glass of water between every drink at your next gathering.



04 TIP 4 OF 6

Fill half your plate *with vegetables.*



Vegetables bring fiber, color, and staying power to a holiday plate. Start there, then make room for everything you came for.

- **Half:** vegetables or salad
- **A quarter:** turkey, fish, beans, or lentils
- **A quarter:** rice, potatoes, bread, or stuffing

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Vegetables on the plate first,** then add the dishes you've been looking forward to.
- ✓ **Bring a vegetable dish to share:** greens cooked the way your family makes them, roasted carrots, or a big, bright salad.
- ✓ **Add something fermented** alongside your meal, like yogurt, kefir, or sauerkraut.

> Nothing is off the table. This is about balance, not banning.

A PAGE TO FILL IN

Your Holiday *Home Plate.*

Take one dish from your holiday table and give it a gentle rebalance. You're not replacing what you love. You're building a little balance around it.

FROM MY KITCHEN *[Caroline: your dish, and the one change you make to it]*

MY HOLIDAY DISH

WHAT'S ON THE PLATE NOW

Protein

Vegetables

Carbohydrate foods

Fats

ONE CHANGE TO THE BALANCE (AN ADDITION, NOT A REPLACEMENT)

MY REBALANCED PLATE

THE NEXT-MEAL RESET

Had a big feast? No skipping meals and no making up for it. Simply return to your usual balanced plate at the next meal. That's it.

05 TIP 5 OF 6



Set *kind boundaries.*

Every invitation is lovely on its own. Together, they can leave you running on empty. Saying no to some things is how you keep the energy to enjoy the ones that matter most, and to show up as yourself when you get there.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Write down the three things you most want** from this season, and plan those first.
- ✓ **Leave one evening a week empty.** Write it in your calendar so it doesn't quietly fill up.
- ✓ **Give yourself a day to answer.** "Let me check and get back to you" is a complete sentence.
- ✓ **Stay for part of it.** Arriving late or leaving early still counts as showing up.

A KIND WAY TO SAY NO

"Thank you so much for thinking of me. I can't make it this time, but I'd love to catch up in the new year."

Your small step: choose your empty evening for this week.

06 TIP 6 OF 6



Ease *the money pressure.*

Gifts, travel, outfits, and hosting add up fast, and money worries have a way of following us to bed. A plan made early takes much of that weight off, and the most memorable gifts often cost the least.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Set a gift budget for each person** and start early, so nothing is bought in a last-minute rush.
- ✓ **Give something from your kitchen:** a jar of your own spice blend, a homemade loaf, or a family recipe written on a card.
- ✓ **Choose the gatherings that matter most,** and let the rest go without guilt.
- ✓ **Hosting? Suggest a potluck.** Everyone brings a dish, the cost is shared, and the table gets more interesting.

The gift people remember is usually time: a walk together, a meal you cook for them, or an afternoon with no phones.

Your small step: write your gift list and a budget beside each name.

YOUR NEXT STEP

You made it through.
Now let's make it hold.

Whichever tip worked for you, keep it going into January. One small habit carried through a busy season is worth more than a fresh start you have to keep restarting.

COMING THE FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY

Midlife Nutrition, *Made Practical*

A live class for busy women who want to eat for what their body needs in this season, with steadier energy, better sleep, and a heart-friendly plate in mind. No forbidden foods. A plan built for real weeks.

Scan to join the waitlist

Explore Digital Suite Resources

Waitlist members get first access and a free gift: The Cholesterol-Friendly Kitchen.

Questions? I'd love to hear from you.
foodlifeandnutrition.link/contact

This guide is for education only. It doesn't diagnose or treat any condition and doesn't replace advice from your own clinician. If you take insulin or other medication, talk with your clinician before changing how you eat or drink. Caroline Payne is a Certified Health Coach with a BSc in Food and Nutrition. She is not a registered dietitian.

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