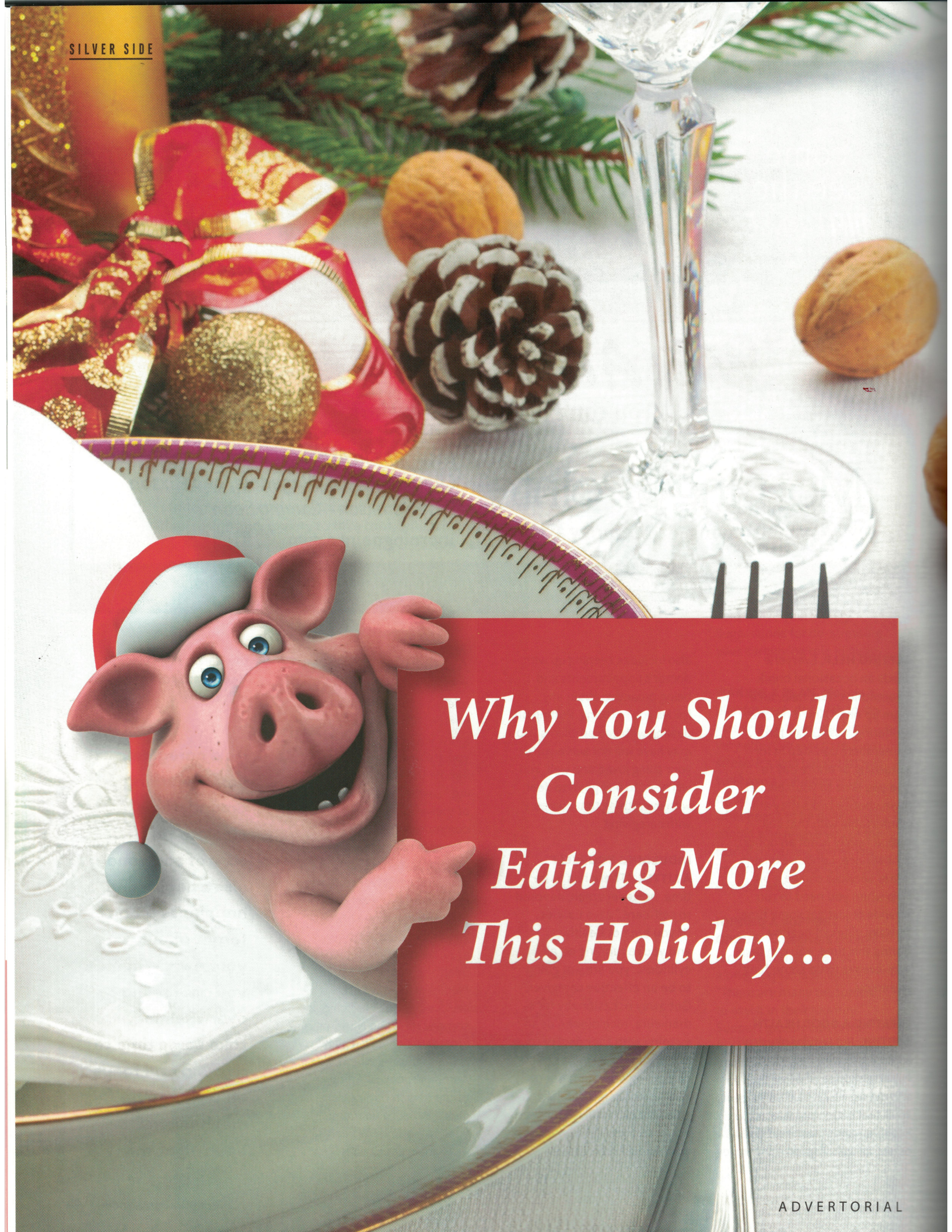

Why You Should Consider Eating More This Holiday...

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It's the holidays and everyone is laughing and enjoying a plate piled high with your family's traditional holiday foods. But as you go to take another bite of those creamy mashed potatoes, your pants feel a little tighter. You remember last year your aunt mentioned you looked heavier. You don't want the family to comment on your diet and weight gain, but you still want to enjoy the delicious home-cooked foods you've had since childhood! The mental dilemma over what *not* to eat continues. Instead, you slowly chew a piece of lettuce from your salad and pretend to be full while strategizing how to avoid dessert…

You're probably expecting this article to sound like most others around the holidays – urging you to: "Follow these simple tips to prevent that dreaded holiday weight gain and have a guilt-free holiday:

- 'Healthify' your favorite recipes! No butter, salt, sugar or absolutely any flavors!
- Make sure to replace that juicy turkey with a bland Tofurkey *(fake tofu veggie meat)*!
- Wear your tightest pair of jeans to make sure there's no room for overeating!"

Does all of this sound familiar to you? The endless cycle of trying so hard but not succeeding? Worrying and obsessing over what *not* to do to be healthy is ironically counterproductive. The negative mindset it creates actually has the opposite effect! If you really desire to improve your health year-round and have been stuck on the Ferris wheel of food guilt, researchers worldwide say there is one most effective strategy, and you'll be shocked by how easy it is!

This holiday, instead of obsessing over what you can't eat, simply focus on this one question: "How can I add more good?" Science shows that asking this question is one of the most successful long-term strategies to improve health! It paints a picture of health as an endless array of good opportunities rather than a suffocating list of rigid rules that inevitably fail, especially around the holidays.

A 2013 study from the Public Health Nutrition Journal proved that focusing on unhealthy food restriction ironically increases the intake of those foods and promotes unwanted weight gain. On the contrary, the researchers found that focusing on increasing healthy foods promotes healthy weight loss and is highly effective at improving overall health in the long term!

This health philosophy can greatly enhance and even extend your life! For example, you may ask, "Can I eat one piece of fruit every day this holiday?" That may seem minimal, but did you know the No. 1 dietary risk factor is not eating enough fruit? A diet low in fruit is responsible for 4.9 million deaths a year worldwide. Less than 14 percent of Americans eat enough fruit, and by eating just one more serving daily, 30,000 lives could be saved, including yours! Right now, you can effortlessly reduce your risk of heart disease by 4 percent with every single serving of fruit you eat! Add another one-and-a-half servings to that and your risk of premature death decreases by 15 percent! What a painless and pleasurable antidote! Just think of the endless ways to improve your life by adding one good thing, without the emotional stress of food restriction.

Asking this question is a no-brainer, largely because there are zero negative side effects and unlimited positive ones. For example, your inclination for unhealthier things naturally declines. If you fill up on more roasted vegetables, there will be less space and craving for two servings of pie. However, you can still enjoy once piece of pie in a satisfying way without the risk of overindulging and suffering from guilt and frustration. If you successfully practice this easy step during the holidays when stakes are high, then you will definitely be able to practice it year-round.

Ultimately, there's something else more impactful to your long-term health than food. Ironically, the stress you may feel about trying to eat healthy can be far more toxic than the food you eat. It sucks the joy out of the holiday for you and those around you! A 75-year-long, cross-cultural study at Harvard examined what makes people the healthiest and happiest throughout their lifetime. And guess what? It actually isn't weight loss or how spot-on their diet is! Science shows that close relationships are the key to long-term health and happiness. So, this year, don't let diet-talk and food guilt put a damper on your happy holiday with loved ones. Instead, embrace the joy of festive meals, focus on increasing good things and let the warmth of those you love fill your cup!