



# FRENCH FEASTING

by Pravin Rajwani

The holidays are usually a time of family, friends and feasting. This period of revellry, from December to February, includes Christmas, New Year and Chinese New Year. Throw in the occasional birthday party and regular family gatherings and you have a series of temptations and indulgences even the most disciplined of diabetics cannot resist. So, how do we **NOT** pack on so much weight and increase our HbA1C to the point that our doctors start their spiel on the 'complications' of being a diabetic?

## Here's my strategy.

**1** Every year, I have several company lunches during Chinese New Year. I had to attend two 'Lo Hei' lunches this year and I **informed everybody at my table that I am diabetic.**

You'd be surprised at the response. Somebody's aunt, uncle, or friend would have diabetes and this gets the conversation (and education) going. Then comes the will power: I would eat a bit of everything and when I feel full, I have a convenient excuse not to have seconds. How can anyone argue with a medical condition? The good thing about telling your fellow diners about your condition is that they become your watchdogs and tend to keep a close watch on your intake!

One critical thing to remember is to titrate your fast acting insulin dosage. I usually give myself one to four units more. Moderation is the key to these events and I have to be thick-skinned enough to say, 'No, thank you,' even if it is the boss shoving food onto my plate.

**2** My next tip is '**do it the French way.**' And no, I don't mean adding butter to everything. Just don't say 'no' to anything but have a little of everything.

Both my aunt and sister were born in February. So we threw a surprise party for them this year serving everything they like to eat; chicken curry from Kazakhstan (home made), mee rebus, Indian rojak, Hokkien mee, chicken rice and three different types of cake. Being a diabetic herself, my sister made her speciality which is her sugar-free strawberry cheese cake. So I had a bit of everything, even the sweet cakes, just like the French would do.

Now, you'd think I have got this down pat. But even though I had not more than two spoons of each cake, my sugar levels were still slightly elevated at the end of that night. So, do not believe for one moment that you can have your sugar-free cake and eat it. From my experience, sugar-free

foods may raise my sugar levels faster mostly because I think it won't and will end up eating too much. My sister's cake is one of those traps.

**3** This brings me to my last tip: **Exercise!** I would be lying if I said I exercised regularly during this holiday period. It's the season for great excuses and, lately, mine has been, "It's raining!"

There is no special method to breaking out of this abyss of laziness. For me, the best way to break this cycle is to start small, even if it is really raining!

- **Run for half an hour instead of an hour.**
- **Exercise at home on my cheap stationary bike which I bought online.**
- **Climb up and down the stairs of my HDB block.**

If I start doing small exercises, I can gradually work my way up back to my usual routine. By the way, if I know I am going to have a big feast, I try to squeeze in a run before that. This helps to raise my metabolic rate to burn off those sugars. I get to enjoy a night of feasting with family and friends without getting into any trouble! You can, too!

