



## Nutrition Nibbles

### Cuddle Up with Comfort Foods

During the cold winter months (although not so cold in California right now!), there is something appealing about snuggling up with a favorite meal from your past. Comfort foods, or those simple familiar foods that remind you of something pleasant from the past, can be a common way to soothe your emotions and soul. Typically high in fat, comfort foods are not always as comfortable to the waistline or your health. Americans rate chocolate cake, meatloaf, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, fried chicken, chicken noodle soup, pizza, peanut butter, ice cream, and potato chips as some of their top favorite comfort foods.

Because no one can make your favorite comfort food quite like your mom or grandma, why don't you consider "cleaning" them up a bit so you can eat your comfort cake and enjoy it too? Read on for some simple ways to savor slightly healthier versions of your favorites.

- **Chocolate Cake:** Try using an egg substitute like egg beaters, fat free or 1% milk, and substituting applesauce for half the oil in your recipe

to lighten up this tasty treat.

- **Meatloaf:** Health up your meatloaf by using lean ground turkey (no skin please) or chicken in place of beef. Sneak in some finely chopped vegetables for a little extra fiber and flavor.
- **Mac 'n' Cheese:** Switch to whole wheat elbow macaroni, throw in some pureed butternut squash, and use 1% milk in place of whole milk and you have a healthier but still creamy and delicious version of your favorite. Try this recipe: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ellie-krieger/macaroni-and-4-cheeses-recipe2/index.html>
- **Mashed Potatoes:** Don't shed the peel when making your potatoes--it adds some heart healthy fiber to your dish. Substitute chicken stock or fat free buttermilk for heavy cream and decrease the amount of butter you use or try olive oil instead. For a slight twist, use sweet potatoes in place of white potatoes for an extra nutrient punch.

### Cold and Flu Busters

You managed to maneuver through the first semester or quarter of the school year pretty healthfully. Now it's back to the grind and everyone around you is coughing and sniffing. How can you stay well this semester and fend off the colds and flu that are making the rounds? Here are a few nutritious tips to keep you in tip-top health:

**Drown your ills in soup?** Your mom was right-- chicken soup is a cure-all. Well, at least chicken soup makes your nose run, relieving nasal congestion, and soothes a sore throat thereby making your cold and flu symptoms feel a bit more manageable. Chicken soup, while comforting, also helps keep you hydrated, which is especially important if you're fending off a fever.

**Launch a bug attack:** Introduce some "good bugs" into your body to fend off the bad cooties you caught. Eating probiotic-rich yogurt is the easiest way to get these goodies into your diet. Make sure your yogurt has the live and active culture

**Questions or Comments? Email me at  
[marymahoneyrd@gmail.com](mailto:marymahoneyrd@gmail.com)**

## Comfort Foods continued...

- **Fried Chicken:** Crush corn flakes and whole grain crackers for your “fried” crust. Dip your chicken in a mix of egg whites and low fat plain yogurt and then into your topping. Pop your chicken into the oven for that “oven fried” wholesome goodness. Here’s a recipe with some good reviews: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ellie-krieger/oven-fried-chicken-recipe/index.html>
- **Chicken Noodle Soup:** This comfort food is actually quite good for you. To make it even better, try whole grain noodles and packing it full of veggies for some extra fiber and vitamins.
- **Pizza:** This fun food requires no proper eating utensils. To lighten it up, switch to whole wheat pizza dough, use part-skim mozzarella cheese, load on the vegetables, and add a little fruit (think pineapple or pears). If you must have meat, try lean Canadian bacon or ham. Here’s a whole handful of fun pizza recipes: [http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes\\_menus/collections/healthy\\_pizza\\_recipes](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/collections/healthy_pizza_recipes)
- **Peanut Butter:** When it comes to any kind of nut butter, peanut butter included, go ala “natural.” Make sure your comfort contains only peanuts and salt. Skip out on the high fructose corn syrup,

partially hydrogenated oil, and palm oil that many name brands and low fat versions contain.

- **Ice Cream:** Go with a slow or double-churned light ice cream and keep your serving to 1/2 cup. Other alternatives include single serving desserts (such as Skinny Cow bars or sandwiches), whole fruit no sugar added sorbet, and fudgsicles.
- **Potato Chips:** The trick here is to purchase or pre-portion single servings. Look for baked and low sodium versions of your all-time favorite chips.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful the next time you decide to cuddle up with your favorite comfort food.

### Heart Healthy Foods

Show some love to your heart this month by enjoying these nutrient powerhouses!

*Salmon* provides a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, wonderful for lowering cholesterol levels.

*Nuts, including almonds and walnuts,* are rich in fiber, heart healthy fats (including plant-based omega-3s), magnesium, vitamin E and folate--all important for keeping your ticker ticking.

*Oatmeal and beans (black and kidney)* are tasty sources of soluble fiber and B-vitamins, powerful cholesterol busters and artery cleaners.

## Cold and Flu continued...

label on the carton. Contrary to popular belief, eating dairy does not make your congestion worse or increase mucus production.

**Some Vitamin C every day will shorten your cold’s stay:** Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that protects your body’s cells when they are under attack and has been found to help shorten the duration of a cold. Include C-rich foods in your diet daily such as, oranges, broccoli, tomatoes, bell peppers, cauliflower, and sweet potatoes.

**Sneak in Some Zinc (and Protein):** While the jury is still out on zinc lozenges and their effect on colds, including some food sources of zinc may be helpful in busting up that cold. Try including some shellfish, lean beef, lean pork, or whole grains in your cold-relieving diet. Low-fat yogurt, cashews, almonds, and dried beans also contain small amounts of zinc. These zinc-rich foods are also good sources of protein, a critical nutrient for healing.

Get plenty of rest and drink lots of water in addition to fine-tuning your nutrition and that illness doesn’t stand a chance! Get well!