

# Food and Fitness

## For the Love of Comfort Foods

### Inside this issue:

**For the Love of Comfort Foods** 1-2

**Comfort Foods from Around the World** 3

**Herbs & Spices** 4-5

**Meat and Herbs Pairing Cheat Sheet** 6

**Brain Exercise** 7

**Monthly Observation** 8

**Contact Information**

Comfort foods are special because they connect deeply to our emotions and personal histories. These cherished dishes can evoke feelings of warmth, happiness, safety and nostalgia. They may remind us of times past and the positive experiences associated with family meals and friendly gatherings. Comfort foods also can offer solace when feeling sad, stressed, or sick — like receiving a warm hug from someone who may no longer be around.



These beloved foods have a bit of science to back them, which is why they work so well. Foods that are sweet and salty release chemicals called endorphins, the same chemicals that are released when we are happy or when we exercise. This means that eating foods like ice cream and pizza can instantly change our overall mood.

Comfort foods are often soft and warm, making them easy to eat. A good example of comfort food is mashed potatoes. When reading the words *mashed potatoes*, you can visualize a time and place they brought you great comfort. These foods are usually high in carbohydrates which provides the body with a quick source of energy, followed by the desire to take a nap or relax.

## For the Love of Comfort Foods

An interesting fact about comfort foods is that they are not the same for everyone. Some foods are more common because of the place we live, while others are common because of family ties or traditions. Trust me, eating someone else's apple butter doesn't give me the same comfort as eating my grandparents' apple butter. Cultures around the world have their own unique comfort



foods. In Japan, a nice bowl of ramen noodles or rice will provide a spark of comfort, while Italian families may enjoy eating a fancy pasta dish. In Mexico, a tortilla with salsa, beans, or cheese could hit the spot. No matter where you are from, everyone has their own preferred comfort foods.

While comforting in the moment, these foods often are not the healthiest choices if we tend to overconsume them. Foods that are fried or loaded with salt, sugary desserts, and processed snacks are high in calories, which can lead to weight gain and can cause health problems. Yes, they do make you feel good in the short term, but regularly overindulging in these foods can cause major health issues long term.

Comfort foods do not have to be given up entirely, but you can find balance by making smart choices. Enjoy your favorite foods in moderation, because making these foods the enemy is not the answer. Try reserving rich comfort foods for special occasions rather than eating them regularly. Also, swapping fried foods for baked versions can be a healthier choice. Another healthier option could be choosing homemade over processed foods most of the time. No matter your approach, you can make small changes toward better health while still enjoying the foods you love.

# COMFORT FOODS

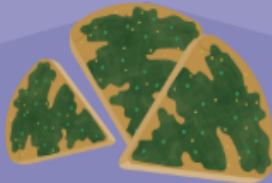
FROM

# AROUND THE WORLD



**CHINA**

**Cha Siu Bao**  
(barbecue pork buns)



**LEBANON**

**Man'oushe**  
(herbed flatbread)



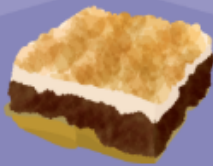
**INDIA**

**Khichdi**  
(rice and lentil stew)



**IRAN**

**Koresh Gheymeh**  
(split yellow pea and beef stew)



**GREECE**

**Moussaka**  
(eggplant & potato casserole)



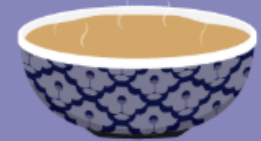
**POLAND**

**Pierogies**  
(Polish dumplings)



**IRELAND**

**Irish Stew**



**JAPAN**

**Miso Soup**



**ICELAND**

**Rice Pudding**



**FRANCE**

**French Onion Soup**



**CANADA**

**Poutine**  
(French fries, cheese curds,  
and gravy)



**AUSTRALIA**

**Meat Pie**



**PUERTO RICO**

**Pemil**  
(slow-roasted, marinated  
pork shoulder)



**SOUTH KOREA**

**Gamjatang**  
(pork bone stew with potatoes)



**UNITED STATES**

**Cheese Burgers**



**ITALY**

**Pasta e Ceci**  
(pasta with chickpeas)



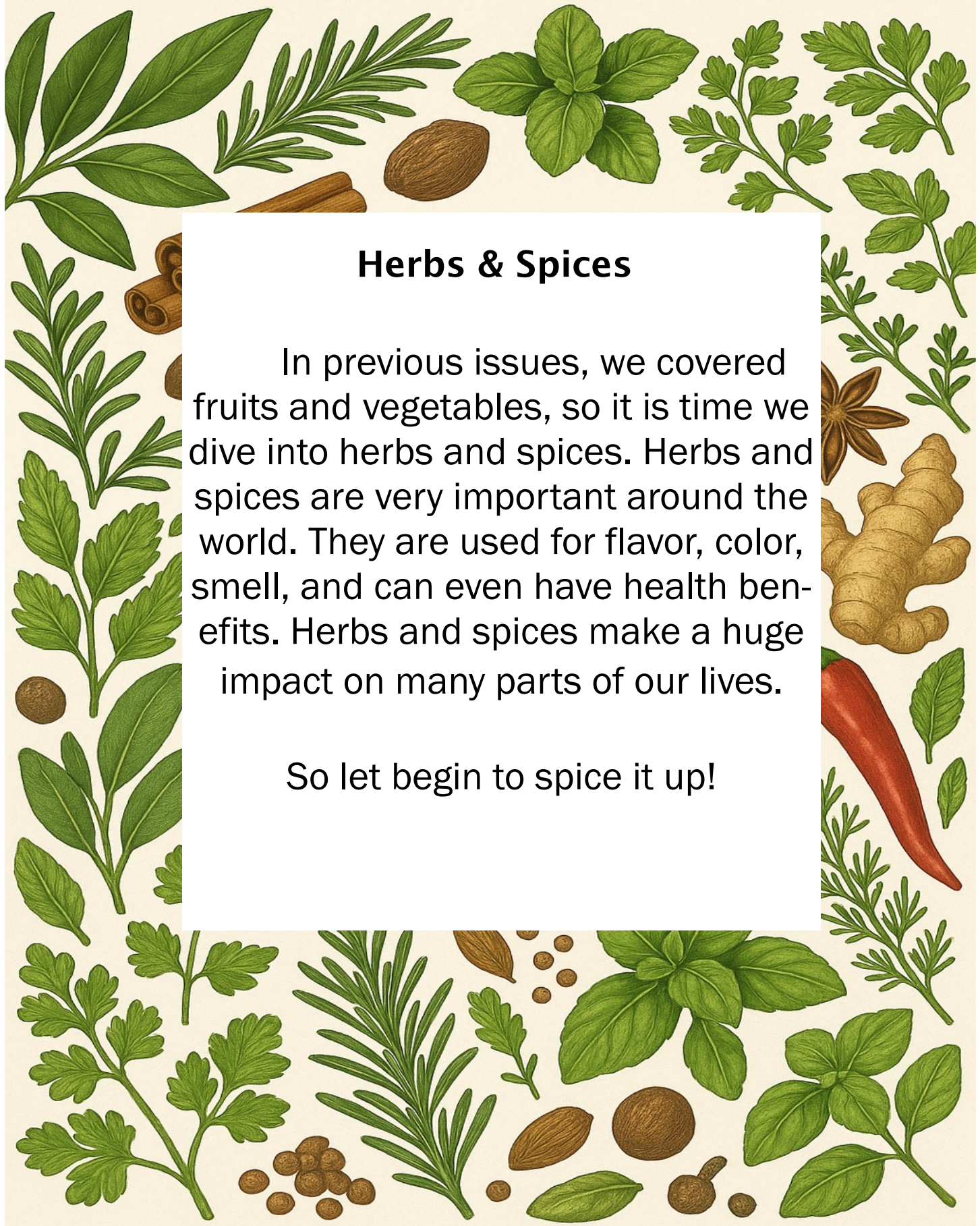
**GHANA**

**Beef & Peanut Stew**



**AMERICAN SOUTH**

**Fried Okra**



## Herbs & Spices

In previous issues, we covered fruits and vegetables, so it is time we dive into herbs and spices. Herbs and spices are very important around the world. They are used for flavor, color, smell, and can even have health benefits. Herbs and spices make a huge impact on many parts of our lives.

So let begin to spice it up!

## List of Herbs and Spices



### 🌿 Herbs (leafy, green, usually fresh or dried)

- Basil
- Bay leaf
- Borage
- Chervil
- Chives
- Cilantro (Coriander leaves)
- Curry leaves
- Dill
- Epazote
- Fennel fronds
- Fenugreek leaves (methi)
- Kaffir lime leaves
- Lavender
- Lemon balm
- Lemongrass
- Lovage
- Marjoram
- Mint (spearmint, peppermint, etc.)
- Oregano
- Parsley (flat-leaf, curly)
- Rosemary
- Sage
- Savory (summer, winter)
- Shiso (perilla)
- Sorrel
- Tarragon
- Thyme

### 🌿 Spices (seeds, bark, roots, dried fruits, etc.)

- Allspice
- Anise seed
- Asafoetida (hing)

- Black cardamom
- Green cardamom
- Caraway seed
- Cassia (Chinese cinnamon)
- Celery seed
- Chili peppers (cayenne, ancho, chipotle, etc.)
- Cinnamon
- Cloves
- Coriander seed
- Cumin
- Dill seed
- Fennel seed
- Fenugreek seed
- Galangal
- Garlic (dried, powdered)
- Ginger (dried, powdered)
- Grains of paradise
- Juniper berries
- Licorice root
- Mace
- Mustard seed (yellow, brown, black)
- Nutmeg
- Paprika
- Pepper (black, white, pink, Sichuan)
- Poppy seed
- Saffron
- Sesame seed
- Star anise
- Sumac
- Tamarind
- Turmeric
- Vanilla

### 🌍 Regional & Lesser-Known

- Ajwain (carom seed)
- Amchoor (dried mango powder)
- Annatto (achiote)
- Berbere (Ethiopian spice blend)
- Kala jeera (black cumin)
- Kalonji (nigella seed)
- Mahlab (cherry pit spice)
- Sichuan peppercorn
- Za'atar (blend of herbs & sumac)



# Meat and Herbs Pairing *Cheat Sheet*

## PROTEIN

## HERBS



+



*Beef is best with...*

Rosemary / Thyme / Oregano

---



+



*Lamb is best with...*

Mint / Bay leaf / Rosemary

---



+



*Chicken is best with...*

Basil / Tarragon / Thyme

---



+



*Pork is best with...*

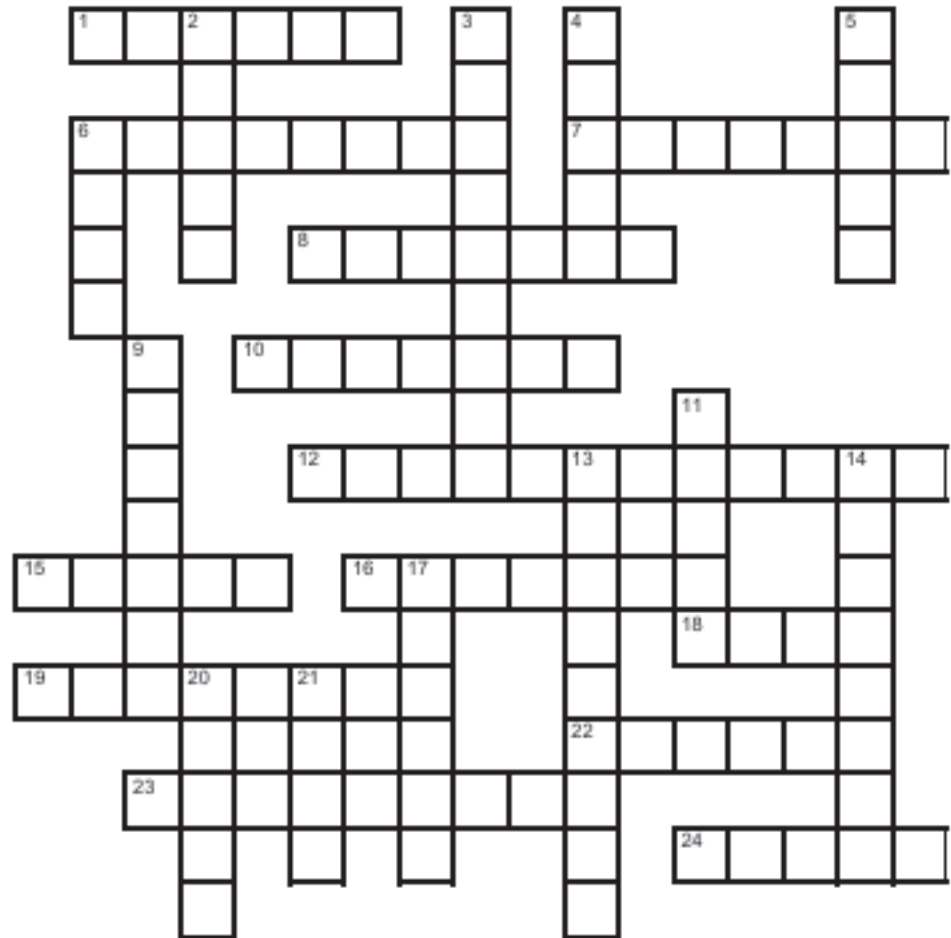
Sage / Coriander / Dill

# Brain Exercise

Don't Just Exercise your body, workout your brain!

## I LOVE FALL

Acorn  
Apple  
Autumn  
Chestnut  
Cider  
Cobweb  
Fall  
Football  
Gourd  
Halloween  
Harvest  
Hay Bale  
Hayride  
Leaves  
Maize  
November  
Nuts  
October  
Pumpkin  
Quilt  
Rake  
Scarecrow  
September  
Sleet  
Thanksgiving



### ACROSS

1. They fall from trees.
6. Popular autumn sport.
8. The 10th month of the year.
10. The gathering of crops.
12. The fourth Thursday in November.
15. Might be patchwork.
16. Seat at a square dance (two words).
18. Leaf gathering yard tool.
19. They are roasted on an open fire.
22. Halloween decoration made by a spider.
23. The 9th month of the year.
24. Decorative squash.

### DOWN

2. Oak tree's fruit.
3. October 31st.
4. Honeycrisp.
5. Also known as corn.
6. The season that follows summer.
9. Fun activity on a farm.
11. Drink made from apples.
13. Used to keep birds off of crops.
14. The 11th month of the year.
17. Another word for the fall season.
20. Semi-frozen rain.
21. What squirrels often gather.



# October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <i>National Kale Day</i>	2 <i>World Farm Animal Day</i>	3 <i>World Smile Day</i>	4 <i>National Taco Day</i>
5 <i>Oktoberfest</i>	6 <i>Physician Assistant Day</i>	7 <i>National Forgiveness Day</i>	8 <i>National Pierogi Day</i>	9 <i>Fire Prevention Day</i>	10 <i>World Egg Day</i>	11 <i>It's My Party Day</i>
12 <i>National Gumbo Day</i>	13 <i>Columbus Day</i>	14 <i>National Dessert Day</i>	15 <i>White Cane Safety Day</i>	16 <i>World Food Day</i>	17 <i>National Pasta Day</i>	18 <i>No Beard Day</i>
19 <i>Evaluate Your Life Day</i>	20 <i>Brandied Fruit Day</i>	21 <i>Pumpkin Cheesecake Day</i>	22 <i>National Nut Day</i>	23 <i>National Mole Day</i>	24 <i>National Bologna Day</i>	25 <i>Make a Difference Day</i>
26 <i>National Pumpkin Day</i>	27 <i>Black Cat Day</i>	28 <i>Wild Food Day</i>	29 <i>Hermit Day</i>	30 <i>National Candy Corn Day</i>	31 <i>Halloween</i>	

## MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS

- Adopt a Shelter Dog Month
- American Cheese Month
- American Pharmacist Month
- Apple Jack Month
- Awareness Month
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Clergy Appreciation Month
- Computer Learning Month
- Cookie Month
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Eat Country Ham Month
- International Drum Month
- National Pizza Month
- National Popcorn Poppin' Month
- National Vegetarian Month
- Sarcastic Month
- Seafood Month



**Kathrine J. Clark, MS, RD, LD**

Nutrition Consultant

1 John Marshall Drive

Huntington, WV 25575

Kathrine.J.Clark@wv.gov

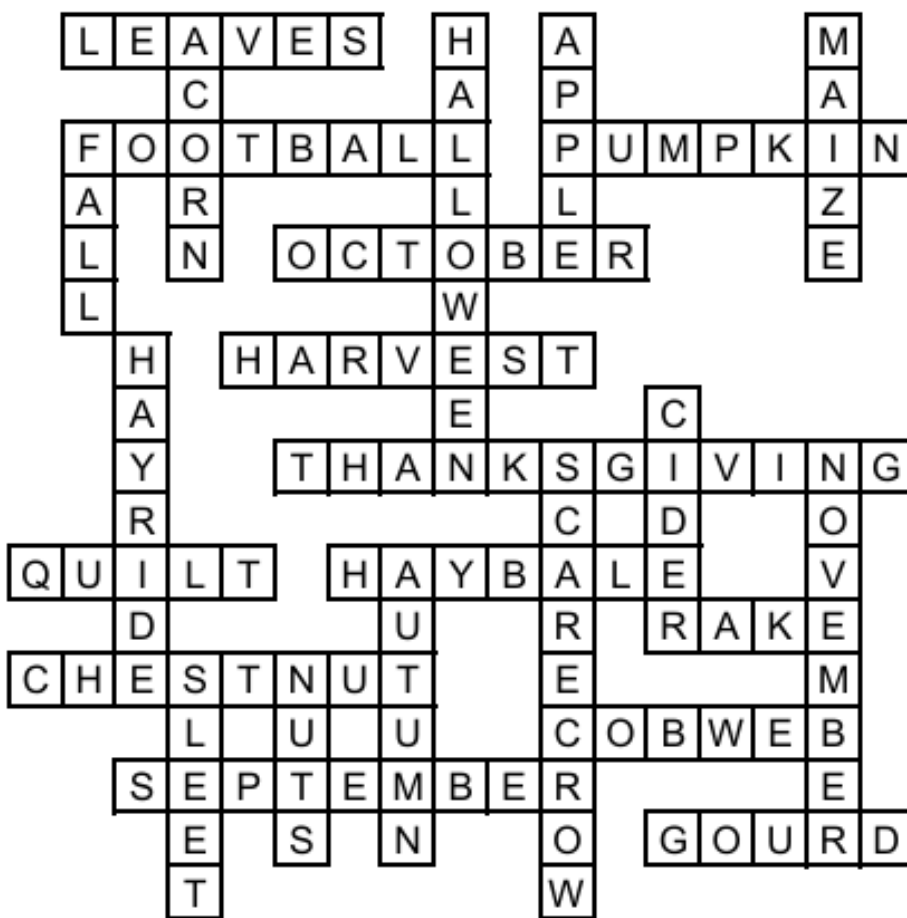
(681) 344-1679



## I LOVE FALL

Crossword

SOLUTION



This newsletter is created by Kathrine J. Clark, MS, RD, LD,  
Nutrition Consultant to the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services.