December 2020: Food, Glorious Food!

An offering to New Mexicans from the faculty and students of the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education at the University of New Mexico.
Food, Glorious Food!

Red chile on the mashed potatoes. Biscochitos. The tryptophan-induced nap. Setting up the extra tables and chairs. Nothing says Holidays quite like the food. Getting together (if not gathering). And the New Year’s Resolutions to shed all those holiday pounds. We explore not only Holiday food but also the wellbeing and cultural aspects of food.
Simple Pleasures

These are our latest finds for relatively quick, easy, often healthy, things you can do during COVID-19 restrictions.

- This series of [viral videos](#) highlights Navajo language and food.

- The [Indian Pueblo Cultural Center](#) (IPCC) is “reimagining Pueblo Harvest Restaurant as the Indian Pueblo Kitchen, an innovative teaching kitchen and restaurant centered around Indigenous cuisine education and exploration.” Each month, the [Pante Project](#) allows customers to order and enjoy food prepared by Executive Chef Ray Naranjo and watch a video to learn about how it was prepared.

- Culture and Cooking: [Children’s Books about Diversity and Food](#) (Resource list with books for children of all ages from the Happy Kids Kitchen)

- Take a virtual field trip to:
  - The [Albuquerque BioPark](#)
  - The [Rio Grande Gorge Bridge](#)
  - [Wheeler Peak](#) via the Williams Lake Trail
  - [Meow Wolf](#) in Santa Fe
  - [Carlsbad Caverns](#)
Southern soul food or comfort food is what we call it...

Recipes travel from generation to generation, with each one of us trying to figure out which special ingredient is missing. When my mom passed down her mother’s biscuit recipe last week, it literally said, “Okay. This is not easy. There is a feel for it...” At family reunions, our takeaway was a handmade bounded spiral book of family recipes. While these days our family is spread nationwide during this pandemic, our roots are traced back to the Georgia Mountains, streams, and some Florida farmland with Elk, berries, and chickens to name a few.

Growing up, we had breakfast joints with homemade biscuits and jam in most places. We add lard to baked goods; and we add oysters to our stuffing since the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean, and Straits of Florida surround Florida.

Comfort food is defined (by Wikipedia) as “a nostalgic or sentimental value to someone, and may be characterized by its high caloric nature, high carbohydrate level, or simple preparation.” For us southerners, we just consider it nostalgic. The carbs do not matter, and preparation is not always so simple. On Sundays, we would make a breakfast feast. Every single time, homemade biscuits were on the menu. Friends would come over just to eat while other times we would head to the neighbors to share a meal together. In honor of this tradition, here is a beloved biscuit recipe passed down from generation to generation, in a spiral notebook, written in cursive. It is a classic southern dish to be paired with jam, which everyone is sure to love on a cold morning this season!

1. 2 cups of flour
2. 6-8 tablespoons of shortening
3. ½ cup of milk
4. Roll out your biscuit’s on a greased pan
5. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes

If you are interested in other Southern comfort food recipes, check out these links to warm apple crisp, mac and cheese, chicken and waffles, and other southern comforts below! Take some pictures, bind up your favorites, and pass them along. I know I am grateful other generations did so for me.

For that special biscuit ingredient, click here.
Down-Home Comfort Recipes here.
Country Living Recipes here.
Southern Fried Chicken and Waffles here.
Cooking has become my new normal.

I miss the days of going to my favorite restaurant and ordering an appetizer and then, maybe, flirting with the idea of dessert. I miss the days when I could easily send a group text to my friends asking to meet me for grub. But none of that now. That was then. Now I cook.

I made use of the pans and spatula given as a house-warming gift. I spent a good fortune on spices I was told would forever change the way I taste the food. I even learned how to use the self-cleaning option on my stove. I’ve learned that cooking isn’t difficult if you like it. So, I like cooking.

When my entire family came down with Covid this summer, I wasn’t thinking of cooking. In fact, I couldn’t think of anything but the worst-case scenario. My nieces, who were experiencing mild symptoms, FaceTimed me every day. They were worried about their parents. They knew I couldn’t go and be with them. I smiled a lot during our virtual visits, but I was struggling with a lot of turmoil inside. How can I help?

I decided to teach them to cook. Although the youngest is not yet 3 years old, the oldest, who just turned 15, could easily navigate and listen to my instructions. She was old enough to work the stove and crack an egg. I realize now, only after months of reflection, how desperate we were for a distraction.

The first assignment I gave to the kids was to make an inventory list of all the food in the house. I had a great time watching each kid come up to the camera to present their findings. I wrote everything down. Throughout the day, I received text after text of food or pictures of packages. They sent a photo of sesame oil, with a follow-up of ‘What’s this for?’ I explained what it was used for and asked if they wanted to make something with it. The oldest niece shrugged, which is teen for yes.

My youngest niece was raptured with the running around, the smells and sounds of it all. We took opportunities to count and measure out loud. We came up with songs on the spot to make her laugh. My sister would sometimes come on the phone and thank me for giving them lessons and for keeping them busy. She did her best to fake a satisfying ‘yum’ when the kids asked her to taste the food.

It wasn’t until later that I realized what a great learning opportunity we all shared. The youngest felt safe and therefore was open to learning about the sounds certain food made when it hit the pan, or sorting out white and brown rice. My oldest niece learned a little bit about the art of cooking and how to communicate with an uncle 400 miles away. I learned that my nieces are the funniest people on earth and sometimes distraction is the best way to help. I look forward to cooking with them ‘IRL’. But for now, I am happy just receiving pictures of cakes and loaves of bread they created.
It’s a Marathon not a Sprint

We’re on a long road to new things. Pace yourself!

Food Related Resources:
If you or someone you know need food-related resources at this time, here are some places offering assistance:

Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico’s Food Assistance Line at 505-349-5340 or 575-523-4390 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Food Distribution information:
https://www.rrfb.org/find-help/find-food/

Food for kids in New Mexico and More food for kids. Here’s a list of New Mexico food banks from the New Mexico Association of Food Banks:
http://www.nmfoodbanks.org/

Here’s a state-wide list of school and non-school based meal sites: https://nmost.org/fighting-hunger-through-ost

Here’s a state-wide list of school-based meal sites for children:
https://www.newmexico.gov/education/meal-sites-for-children/

New Mexico’s Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT) hotline for parents: 1-833-415-0569.
Nearly 10 months into the COVID-19 pandemic...

...and with the onset of the holiday season, it is easy to let health and wellness fall to the bottom of the priority list. With added responsibilities and stress, it can be difficult to realize when you may have slipped into unhealthy patterns. Here are a few behaviors to consider when evaluating your physical and mental health and wellness this holiday season.

· **Changes in weight**: Many of our daily schedules changed dramatically at the start of the pandemic, potentially altering eating and exercise patterns, for better or for worse. Some may have experienced unwanted weight gain or loss. Instead of focusing on the specific number on the scale, focus more on how you feel in your body. Do you feel rested, balanced, and energized? Or do you feel run-down and fatigued? Of course, not all fatigue is related to an unhealthy body weight, but significant and rapid changes in weight can lead to feeling generally unwell. Make sure you are eating a variety of whole foods, and enough to maintain a weight that feels physically and mentally good to you. Not sure what a healthy body weight is for you? Consider working with a dietitian or health professional that practices a [Health at Every Size (HAES*)](https://www.haes.org) approach.

· **Eating patterns**: Regardless of your body weight, unhealthy relationships with food can develop in response to stress or mental health issues like anxiety or depression. Disordered eating patterns which include undereating or overeating may be used to cope with stress and emotional overload. If you or a loved one are experiencing shifts in relationships with food, eating much less or much more than usual, placing too much emphasis on healthy foods or body weight, or adopting an “earn your food” attitude, it may be time to investigate. The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) has an [easy screening tool](https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) for individuals 13 years of age and older to help identify disordered eating patterns.

· **Alcohol**: Preliminary research suggests an increase in alcohol consumption during the pandemic. The holidays can also be associated with higher alcohol consumption. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends no more than 14 standard drinks per week for men or 7 standard drinks per week for women. Most dietitians would likely recommend even less. While an occasional drink or two is not a problem for many adults, if you feel your relationship with alcohol may be unhealthy, take a minute to fully evaluate. Try the [AUDIT screening tool here](https://apps.niaaa.nih.gov/audi.html).

· **Movement**: During times of stress and uncertainty, the power of physical movement cannot be discounted. For many, the pandemic has increased screen time and decreased movement. You may lack the time and energy for physical activity, especially as the holiday season and colder weather set in. During the holidays, it is important to realize exercise does not need to be a herculean effort. Small amounts of exercise can increase energy levels and help maintain a healthy body weight, even walking just 15 minutes a day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week and muscle strengthening activities (think yoga, Pilates, high-intensity interval training, or carrying your two-year-old for 1 mile of that hike) two days per week. If that is not feasible, that’s totally okay right now; focus on doing activities you enjoy with your family or COVID bubble. If those activities involve movement, even better.

Between the pandemic and holiday season, it is increasingly difficult to prioritize health and wellness. If you find yourself neglecting diet or exercise, know that it is okay and a totally normal response to stress and fatigue. If you find unhealthy patterns are, however, affecting your relationships, daily functioning, or mental health, please use the resources above to consider an honest evaluation this holiday season. Afterall, being happy and healthy is the best gift you can give your loved ones.
Is the snow day dead? One of the unexpected and surprisingly deep losses this Fall was the “snow day”. With so many remote learning and remote working, organizations that would typically close for the day due to bad weather didn’t. They continued online. This was a deep shock for many -- seeing the snow, feeling that excitement, the anticipation of a less structured day than planned, hot cocoa, maybe some baking, playing in the snow -- then the crashing understanding that it would be a day just like all the others. That was an unforeseen loss for us all, and definitely in Jay Parkes’ home (Professor of Educational Psychology).

As nutrition graduate students,...we come from different backgrounds and cultures, but all share a love for cooking and nutrition. We look back to our earliest memories and long-standing traditions around food to share our tips for cooking up health this season. We hope you will reminisce with us and discover ways to connect with your families and pursue lifelong health.

Do you remember your first cooking experiences? I myself have vivid memories of rolling tortillas as a child with my grandmother in her kitchen and flipping pancakes with my mom on Saturday mornings. My favorite time of year was always the holiday season when my family and I would prepare a feast of New Mexican dishes. I recall sitting at the table with my siblings, mixing the dough for biscochitos and forming them into various shapes, such as stars and Christmas trees. I remember my dad showing me how to properly prepare tamales like his mother used to, by spreading the masa thinly, and filling it with red chile and pork. Those experiences were more than just fun times, they sparked my interest in cooking and led me toward a career in nutrition. -Jaelyn

My first memories in the kitchen are of me standing on a chair by the stove with my Swedish grandmother supervising what I was stirring, I was probably 5 years old. She was an amazing cook, she could bake anything and had a small catering business in addition to being a full-time care nurse. She rarely measured anything and taught me to cook by understanding the necessary ratios of ingredients. Once you understand that 1 tablespoon of butter to 1 tablespoon of flour makes a roux and that it is always 1 cup of rice to 2 cups of water among other common ratios, the rest of cooking becomes instinctual. Spending time creating full meals or cookies and elaborate cakes with her are some of my fondest memories. She was always patient and never criticized, there was always a solution to a “mistake”. These real time experiences were so much more meaningful than watching any professional chef cooking show—though they are instructive. I still make her famous Pepparkakor cookies, a thin...
spicy, crunchy taste of heaven. When my son was about 5, I decided that we would start a Christmas cookie tradition where we would make some of my grandmother’s recipes, add our own and give them as gifts to family and friends. I focused on recipes that were low in sugar, adding spices instead, cookies can be healthier! Twenty-five years later, we are still doing this every year, refining our low sugar recipes. Now that I have a commercial kitchen it is easier to make 30-40 dozen cookies, but it is still just as much fun and is a valued tradition that we share. - Ann

I remember walking back from school into the alley of my home in Taiwan. The smell of my grandmother’s cooking always made me excited and I would run home to see what was for dinner each night. The kitchen is where grandmother and I have our own little world where I always get to taste the first bite before the dishes hit the dinner table. During the holidays, grandmother and I make the best team to prepare special meals for the family. Starting with going to the traditional markets and picking out groceries, we would spend the entire morning in the market, and I would learn about different seafood, vegetables, meat cuts, and of course the skill of bargaining! One of my favorite dishes from grandmother is making hot pot. As Taiwanese, we often have hot pot for special occasions where everyone is gathered around the table as steam warms up our bodies and souls. Looking back, I feel very fortunate to have my grandmother take me into the world of food. I realized the importance and significance of nutrition and the relationship with food for children and family. - Erica

The holiday season is a wonderful time to get you and your family more involved in the kitchen, but that’s not the only benefit. The kitchen is a great place to practice and develop lifelong skills with your children such as reading, following directions, and cleaning up. Cooking allows kids and adults to be creative and to explore their food preferences. It allows you to share your culture and traditions with the next generation. Taking time to find a recipe, choose ingredients, and prepare and eat together will provide an opportunity to connect with your family (and disconnect from a screen). Find ways to involve the whole family in the kitchen this season. Whether it’s baking cookies, making a quick snack, or preparing your favorite dinner. It will be worth your time to do something positive with your family in the present and invest in their future. Spend this holiday season with your family in the kitchen cooking up some of your favorite dishes and enjoy the foods that will warm up your body and soul!

Need some ideas? Check out these recipes for our favorite holiday dishes:

- [https://www.aspicyperspective.com/chinese-hot-pots/](https://www.aspicyperspective.com/chinese-hot-pots/)

Coping Skills

We need to recommit to what works and to learn new ways.

COVID & the Holidays

Tricks and tactics we learned at Thanksgiving that we can use throughout the holidays:

• It’s not just Grandma’s recipe, it’s the way she does it! Work with her on a video call so she can coach you through it.

• The Holiday Cookie, and the Cookie Exchange, are pandemic-safe!

• Here is a list of COVID-19 safe holiday activities in New Mexico.

• Adapt the old rituals to new circumstances.

• Eight ideas for a virtual holiday party.

• Ideas for virtual family activities.

• More ideas for virtual family activities.
Long ago, anthropologists experimented with poetry as a way to express complex ideas about social and psychological life.

Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Edward Sapir (early 20th century cultural anthropologists) all wrote poetry, and today it is not unusual to see scholarly and teaching performances of poetry at academic conferences in the human and psychological sciences. What is poetry? Howard Nemerov described poetry as “literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm.” An ode is a particular kind of poem: “a lyric poem in the form of an address to a particular subject, often elevated in style or manner and written in varied or irregular meter. A poem meant to be sung.” Some poems rhyme, and that is fine, but poetry does not have to rhyme.

Poet Laureate of the United States Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek), a graduate of the University of New Mexico, observed that “The world begins at the kitchen table” in Perhaps the World Ends Here. Born in 1951, Harjo has created numerous books of poetry, books for young people, albums of original music, and more. She published her first book of poetry (What Moon Drove Me to This?) in 1980. The Poetry Foundation offers a sampler of Joy Harjo’s poems, and the work of other Native American poets. Poetry illuminates the human experience, as in Simon Ortiz’ (Acoma) reflections on Becoming Human.

The American humorist Ogden Nash (1902 - 1971) used poetic verses to amuse, delight, surprise, and captivate readers. As Jama Kim Rattigan (2011) wrote in her Alphabet Soup food blog: “Who else so deftly misspells words (or makes up his own), packs in the puns, teases the reader with irregular meter and lines of uneven length? He took great pleasure in the element of surprise, pulling out all the stops for comic effect.” Nash wrote quite a number of poems about food. For example,

The Parsnip
The parsnip, children, I repeat,
Is simply an anemic beet.
Some people call the parsnip edible;
Myself, I find this claim incredible.

And,

The Cow
The Cow is of bovineilk;
One end is moo, the other is milk.

For more food poems with illustrations, see the 1989 book Food by Ogden Nash and Etienne Delessert.

Here is an activity that could be done on one’s own or with others. Write a poem about food and share/exchange it with a friend or family member. If you prefer, write and share a personal story about food. Illustrate your poem or story with a drawing. This might be a great way for elders to share reminiscences about family food traditions. It could possibly become a new family food-related tradition!

Here is my own contribution to this year’s WASH NM food poem exchange. I wrote this last summer while thinking about the wider context of food as an aspect of human lifespan development and wellbeing in New Mexico.
An Ode to Food

Food!

Food for pleasure
Food for health
Food for thought
sustenance
comfort
survival

Food deserts
Food insecurity
Food rules
Food and culture
and tradition
and learning
and sharing
and joining together
and excluding

Food competitions
Contesting food
Taste and Consumption
as experience
and expression

“Take your medicine!”

This request may often conjure up the image of a pill, and along with this, possibly bringing an unpleasant taste to one’s palate. As a child, when feeling ill in the belly, the unpleasantness of medicine was not always the case. My grandmother would serve me a cup of warm atóle (a drink made of blue cornmeal) with just the right amount of sweetness and sometimes cinnamon. Of course then, I thought it was simply a treat and a sign of a caring grandmother who wanted me to be comfortable and cared for. Little did I know how this was medicine, both the gesture and the contents within the cup. Not only did it touch upon the soul, but also made my belly pain go away. My grandmother had much medicinal wisdom that could cure the heart and the soul, the physical, mental, and spirit. Many indigenous and Latinx communities remember the medicine of grandmotherly gestures as this, however, not many today define a food such as atóle as medicinal as we reach for the convenient capsules and tablets in the medicine cabinet. Our traditions of health and wellness were once not a one and done pill, but part of everyday living. We have pushed aside and even marginalized the common staple of New Mexican food as medicine, talked about as “the poor man’s food”: frijoles (pinto beans). Beans may serve as a preventative measure for heart disease and diabetes.

Atóle, especially when juniper ash is added, holds properties that keep us well including calcium, iron, and magnesium. Some communities around the world believe that the ash also pulls toxins from the body, further helping the healing process when someone has a cold, for example. Atóle and its nutrients are critical for the growth of our youth as well as for the elders as they have the potential to become frail. Other beverages not often thought
of as medicine are the liquádos (fruit-based juices) we often see at places like the state fair or more so now referred to as health smoothies. Unfortunately, process sugars are added to meet the tastes of the modern tongue. Needless to say, they of course are commonly known to have many vitamins and come in various flavors such as pineapple, watermelon, and tamarind. Watermelon is very hydrating, which within our New Mexican climate, we are always in need of. Pineapple (along with the common chokecherry in NM) has been traditionally used for soothing coughs, especially when combined with honey and the anti-microbial herb, thyme (a substitute for the New Mexican popular and over-harvested herb osha). Others have used pineapple for curing colitis and for speeding up the healing of tissue injuries. Finally, tamarind has been used by indigenous communities to relieve digestive issues along with many other health concerns.

Herbs are part of our everyday food preparation that help us maintain wellness, as well.

Turmeric, for example, has recently been very popular for health conscious circles and are thought to have anti-carcinogenic and anti-inflammatory properties. In fact, we often push aside that little piece parsley on our plate at restaurants without realization of its medicinal purpose. It is not simply there for garnish, but is known to be helpful for post-meal digestion. Others may use it for treatment of urinary track issues. The use of particular herbs for physical health is endless. And I must also briefly discuss those which are useful for both physical and mental wellbeing, as well. The most obvious herbs that have helped to calm anxieties among New Mexicans for generations are chamomile (manzanilla) and lavender (alucaema). Still yet, another nervine, is passionflower (pasiflora) effectively used for generalized anxiety and insomnia.

While most herbs are available at any grocery market, one must take precaution and consult with physicians, licensed complementary medicine doctors, and/or community accredited traditional healers. Many people ask what can be used if they are dealing with symptoms of COVID-19, for example. Herbs and food supplement general health and wellness and should not be used in place of mainstream medicine. As previously mentioned, the common and popular herb used by New Mexicans is oshá (Ligusticum porteri). The root of the plant is often used for respiratory illness. However, the knowledge of local traditional healers and elders tells us that it is considered a “hot plant.” Traditional healers have come across experiences where clients they serve are searching the herb online and using the root for medicine. However, as there are “hot plants,” symptoms of the body can be either hot or cold in nature and must be balanced in the knowledge of herbal medicine. COVID-19 respiratory issues are “hot” and thus a “hot herb,” such as oshá, has been experienced in the community to agitate respiratory symptoms.

Many of these medicinal foods/herbs that have been part of New Mexican wellness are still being further investigated scientifically. But community-based validity has surpassed for generation after generation, grandmother/elder approved. Food and herbs (and other traditional practices) as medicine are so important to New Mexicans that the right to use them are protected by the NM HB 664 (https://nmcaamp.org/) designed to “Protect people’s access to traditional, cultural, complementary and alternative health care therapies...[and]...Protect the practitioner’s right to practice traditional, cultural, complementary and alternative health care therapies.” The modern world has shifted our concept of the word medicine as well as the diet for New Mexicans. There are many additives and processed foods that have made what was once healthy not so much so. If you would like to learn more about many traditional food and herbs as medicine I recommend the following books for general education:


**Disclaimer:** Please consult with your physician and/or traditional health practitioner before considering the consumption of any of the mentioned food or herbs.


For those in the Helping Professions

- The UNM Family Development Program is offering a series entitled Listening, Learning, Leading Learning Community Series. The series will lead to a NM Early Childhood Training Certificate for hours attended covering Competency 3: Family and Community Collaboration. Sessions start in January, so Register today!
- The New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network has a Fighting Hunger Through Out-of-School Time website with advice, funding opportunities, and other resources. You can sign up for the NMOST Monthly Meals Newsletter there, too.
- Lessons learned from the implementation of Pandemic EBT.
- First Nations Development Institute is offering the GATHER Food Sovereignty Grant to organizations. Deadline is January 14, 2021.
- The What Works Clearinghouse of the US Institute for Education Sciences has produced a webinar that provides a brief “tour” of the clearinghouse, and then focuses on the resources there related to remote learning best practices.
- The Regional Education Laboratories have created a website of evidence-based remote learning best practices for the pandemic.
- For those working in Higher Education, here’s a great reminder of the need for Radical Self-Care, and links to other resources from the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity.

What’s Next?

Elders on January 20 -- We start the New Year with reflections on our Wise Ones, on wisdom, on our elders, and our extended families. How do our elders contribute to our wellbeing and we to theirs? What wisdom can we draw upon during this time? How can we be in our extended families when gathering is problematic?
The faculty and students of the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of New Mexico would like to offer to all New Mexicans thoughts, ideas, and resources from ourselves and our areas of study and work -- counseling, educational psychology, family & child studies, and nutrition -- to enlighten, soften, and aid the COVID-19-related transitions. We intend to make this offering monthly, each with a theme relevant to our times. With informed reflection and action throughout this time, we can all improve our Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico.

All issues of WASH NM are available in pdf format at: http://coehs.unm.edu/departments-programs/ifce/wash-nm.html

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About IFCE

The department houses four diverse, but interconnected, programs that prepare students to address the myriad issues faced by the State of New Mexico. Our faculty members are leaders in their disciplines of Counselor Education, Educational Psychology, Family and Child Studies, and Nutrition; although each of these programs reflect different professional fields and identities, we all have shared values of human development, diversity, and excellence in scholarship and teaching. We offer various Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral Degrees and a number of programs have achieved national accreditations in their fields, a true marker of success and innovation.

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