



# Food For Thought



## The Dish on Comfort Food

(NAPSA)—As creatures of comfort, Americans are continuing to take stock in a hot trend this season—homestyle food. “Whether it’s fried chicken and mashed potatoes, a grilled cheese sandwich or a hot fudge sundae, Americans are enjoying comfort foods this year,” states food expert, Bonnie Tandy Leblang, RD and contributor to *Parade’s* annual “What America Eats” issue.

A recent survey finds Americans are turning to the familiar tastes of comfort food to please their palates during the colder months. Survey results confirm that seasonal factors and a stressful environment increase the likelihood that Americans will consume comfort food. In fact, seven out of 10 people surveyed chose winter as the peak season for comfort food. Furthermore, studies suggest that comfort food satisfies certain emotional cravings and is a common way to cope with stress.

“People don’t just eat when they’re hungry, but when they’re tired, bored, stressed, anxious or lonely,” explained Leblang. “Chances are, when it’s Mom’s meatloaf, a big bowl of mashed potatoes, a bucket of KFC fried chicken or a slice of homemade apple pie, there’s a certain emotional hunger that gets satisfied, too—that’s comfort food.”



When asked about the emotional gratification of comfort foods, respondents ranked the following:

- Gives me a good feeling so I can carry on: 50 percent
- Takes my mind off the problem: 38 percent
- Reminds me of good times in the past: 27 percent
- Makes me feel safe: 18 percent
- Reminds me of Mom: 9 percent

State of mind was the strongest factor motivating people’s desire for comfort food. More than half of those surveyed identified their emotional state to be the leading trigger for craving comfort food—almost double the total of those who selected hunger.

“People are gravitating to the foods they associate with less stressful times—like their childhood,” noted Leblang. “This helps

to explain why hearty, homestyle foods like fried chicken, meatloaf and macaroni and cheese have become the foods *du jour*.”

Interestingly, more women than men turn to comfort food during times of stress (81 percent to 64 percent), bad weather (39 percent to 27 percent), relationship problems (36 percent to 19 percent) and tragedy (27 percent to 12 percent). In contrast, more men than women turn to comfort food in times of celebration (45 percent to 31 percent).

As Americans retreat to their homes, they are forgoing fancy foie gras in favor of more familiar foods. Three-fourths of respondents said they are most likely to eat comfort food in front of the television and in the privacy of their home.

Bonnie Tandy Leblang is an internationally syndicated food columnist, researcher and writer for *Parade* magazine’s annual “What America Eats” issue. She has appeared on numerous national television shows and is a popular contributor to magazines and newspapers for her insight and knowledge of food, culinary arts and nutrition. Her nationally syndicated “Supermarket Sampler” column is printed in over 100 newspapers nationwide. As a registered dietitian, Leblang shares a passion for food, cooking and life—and occasional craving for comfort foods.