



# FOOD & FUN HOUR: COMFORT FOOD

Meeting #1

September 12, 2024  
1pm-2pm

# Group Expectations

- How to interact and discuss via Zoom
- OAM community: all types of affiliations are welcome!
- Code of Conduct
  - We are all coming from different backgrounds and perspectives. Please interact with mindfulness and respect!



# INTRODUCTIONS

**First name & pronouns**



**What does comfort  
food mean to you?**

# Building Context

- In 1970, actress Liza Minelli coined the modern usage of "comfort food."
  - Shift from historical European context: Bland foods for the young, old, and ill --> Think of our Flavor Neutral menu!
  - The most important part of this definition is YOU!
- Varying perceptions and approaches



**"Comfort food is anything you just yum, yum, yum."**



# Foodways and Identity

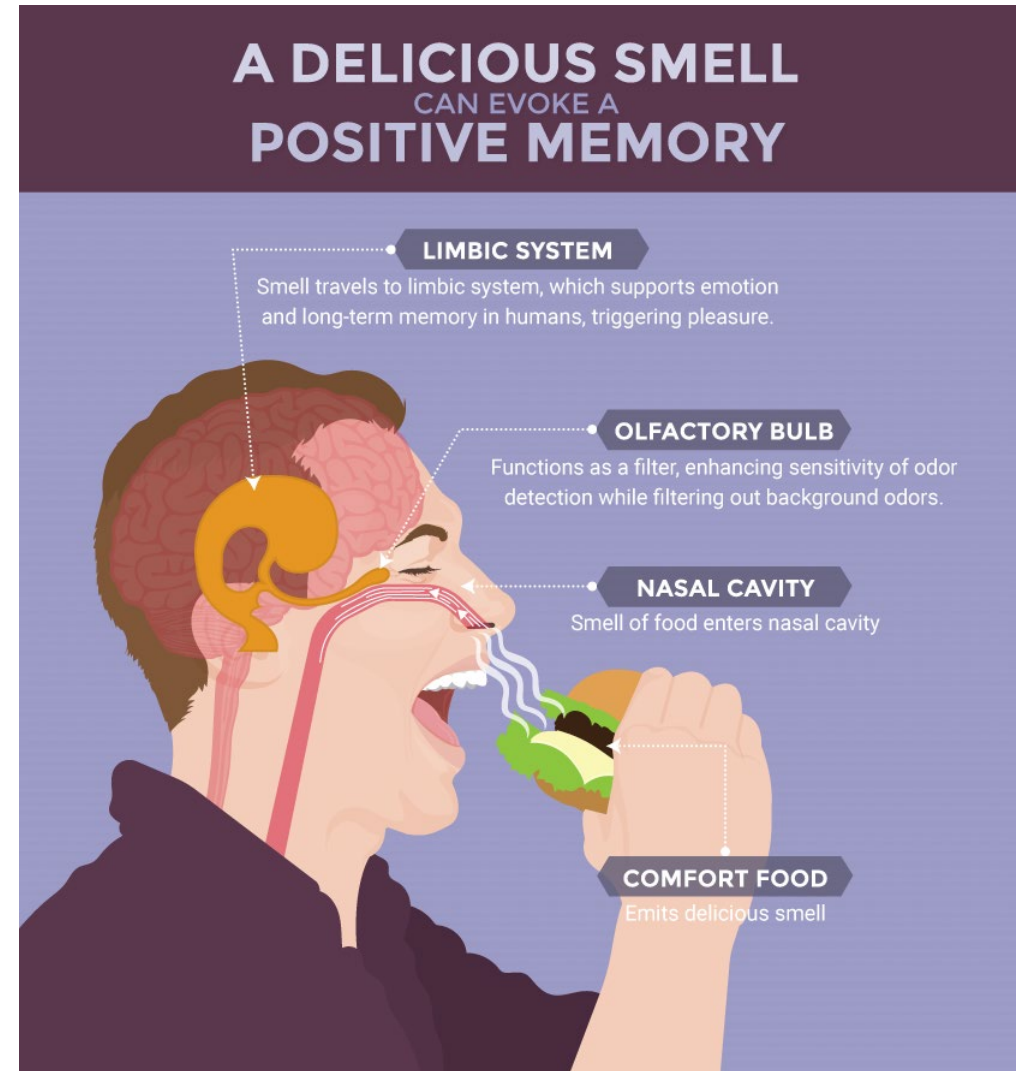
## Case Study: Black Food Traditions

- African American Soul Food: Creativity and survival amidst enslavement and deprivation.
- *The Cooking Gene* by Michael W. Twitty

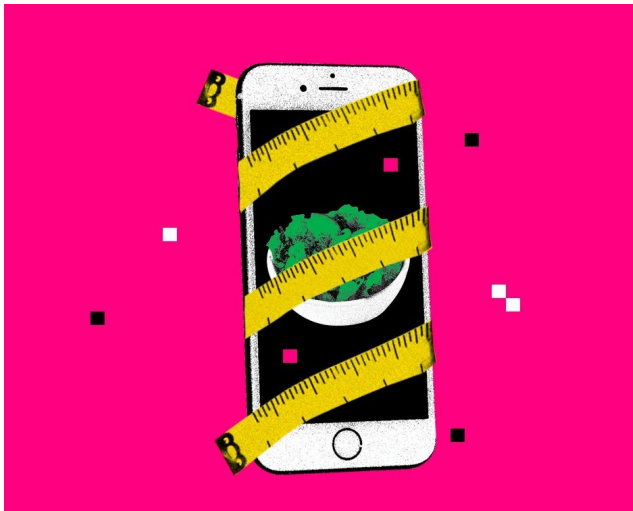


# Broader Context: Values and Messaging

- Role of comfort food in times of tumult
  - Stress relief
  - Connection
  - Nostalgia
- As comfort food has become more prominent, Diet Culture has demonized certain views and forms of it.
  - Food guilt and morality
  - Othering of cultural foodways







# DIET CULTURE

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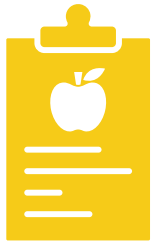
A set of cultural myths around food, weight, and health

Diet culture focuses on **thinness as an ideal** and projects positive or negative value onto food and associated behaviors.

## GUIDING DEFINITION

**Comfort Food**: Any food that is connected to/elicits positive personal, cultural, communal memories, feelings, and histories.





# Cultural Meals Program

To better serve our diverse community of clients, Open Arms started a Cultural Meals Program to develop accessible, culturally appropriate meals to serve Hmong, Latinx, and East African clients who are disproportionately impacted by the illnesses we serve.

## Cultural Meals Program Consultants



**Jamal Hashi**  
East African Culinary  
Consultant



**Maiah Thao**  
Hmong Culinary  
Consultant



**Soleil Ramirez**  
Latinx Culinary  
Consultant

# Best Practices Learned



## Community Involvement

Involve the local community in every step of the development and implementation process



## Reassessment

Reassess current nutrition standards and culinary practices. Ensure that the practices and standards are appropriate for the specific culture and cuisine. Ensure that staff is up-to-date and trained.



## Transparency

Be open and honest about the menu and expectations current and future clients should have regarding the recipes and presentation of the meals. Explain the production and nutrition limitations and what that means for the recipes and the menu.



# HMONG MENU

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Comfort Food  
Example:

Pulled Pork with Collard  
Greens



# EAST AFRICAN MENU

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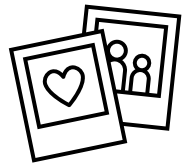
## Comfort Food Examples:

Gomen Besiga (Beef  
and Collard Greens),  
Matoke, Boko Boko



# DISCUSSION

**What are your favorite comfort foods?**



**What memories do they evoke?**

**What do they mean to you?  
How do they make you feel?**



# CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Reading:	Watching:	Listening:
<u>High on the Hog</u> by Jessica Harris	Hamza Hayauddin on " <u>(Dis)comfort Food: A medium for storytelling and social change</u> "	<u>Smart Mouth Ep 221: Comfort Food with Niccole Thurman</u>
<u>Comfort Food: Meanings and Memories</u> edited by Michael Owen Jones and Lucy M. Long	John Dreyer on " <u>Comfort Food and Cultures</u> "	<u>Food Sovereignty: A Growing Movement</u>
" <u>What Americans can learn from other food cultures</u> " by Amy S. Choi	" <u>Hmong Food Recipes: Grandma's Pulled Pork with Mustard Greens and Ginger</u> "	<u>Comfort Eating with Grace Dent</u>
" <u>Boiled Pork, Hmong Greens, and Persistence</u> " by Mecca Bos	"Searching for Soul Food" series on Hulu	<u>Gastropod</u>
" <u>The Science of Comfort Food</u> " by Melinda Wenner Moyer	<u>Gather</u> documentary on Netflix	<u>The Sporkful</u> with Dan Pashman

# References

- <https://daily.jstor.org/a-brief-history-of-comfort-food/>
- <https://www.blackfoodie.co/the-humble-history-of-soul-food/>



# Future Discussion Topics

What would you like to talk about in future meetings?

Any guests would you like to see?

Do any of you have a food topic you'd like to present on?

