

By now, you've likely heard the joke about the "Covid 15" - the extra pounds we expect due to our new schedules (and close proximity to our refrigerators). It's an interesting, unsettling, and sometimes amusing concept, but the truth is, many of us are experiencing changes to our appetites, food choices, and meal plans. I thought I would share [this article](#). I don't agree with everything the author says (ahem, swapping out sugar for maple syrup in a recipe is going to change the cost more than the nutrition profile), but she calls attention to something we may all be noticing, but haven't quite named yet. We're looking for comfort, familiarity and security in our food choices these days. Our guts are a little more unsettled, thanks to our nerves; we're worried about the next shortage at the grocery store and, whether we have enough of it; our families are now home for every.single.meal! The struggle is real.

Here are a few of my own "eating during corona" tips; if they're helpful or reassuring, great. If they're not, or you're all set in the eating department, just dump 'em.

- **That stomach upset you may be feeling is a real and physical side effect of stress:** Be kind to your system. Alternate soothing cups of mint or ginger tea between meals. Sometimes eating smaller meals more frequently (or with the same frequency) can help ease digestion. If you're feeling queasy, this is an excellent time to experiment with fruit and vegetable swaps- try applesauce instead of a whole apple, or use chopped frozen broccoli in a recipe instead of tackling a whole, fresh, spear.
- **Plan your meals and grocery trips:** Heading unarmed into a store with sparsely stocked shelves and a tight timeline (get in, keep your distance, and get out), is likely to have consequences for your wallet and waistline. Meal planning is my favorite activity of all time, so if you'd like some pro tips and hacks, please reach out! Don't forget to plan breakfast and lunch too (though, they might be pretty simple). Include plenty on the menu that are comforting, crowd pleasing and nutritious (homemade chicken soup, turkey burgers, chili and rice, scrambled eggs with fruit and toast homemade chicken or tofu nuggets, tacos with beans and roasted veggies, Caesar salad with whatever protein you've got). No need to overthink things these days; what was your favorite comfort food as a kid? It was probably delicious and nutritious. Mine was my dad's veggie and chicken stir-fry (though these days I opt away from the minute rice that my parents swore by in favor of long grain basmati or brown). Once you're done drooling over your meal plan, make a detailed list and try to group items by the area they're found to minimize the time you spend in the store.
- **Find ease in basic guidelines:** Add fruits and vegetables to each meal, enjoy lean protein sources, include grains and starchy vegetables, in modest amounts, and find room to include some whole grains. Keep portion sizes reasonable and remember to take your time when eating. Including lots of color is a simple way to ensure nutrition quality and boost your immune system! Lastly, don't be too hard on yourself, and if you REALLY enjoy cheez-its, buy the cheez-its... maybe just one box for now.

The bottom line is, in our society, we are influenced to overthink food, our food choices, food habits, dietary patterns and the like. This is a great time to let go of that noise and get back to what food should be- nourishment and opportunities for creativity and human connection (in small groups, of course).