

# The Sundial

Issue 6 | Spring 2023

*Budget-Friendly  
College Dorm Meals*

*Cheesy  
Grits*





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*Issue's 6 cover was generated using artificial intelligence, then edited and retouched by our team.*

# Letter from the editor



I remember being a young girl and watching my Abuelita cook in the kitchen for her big family. The silver steel pot she used to make the arroz con pollo would sit in the middle of the table while the whole family would take spoonfuls of it and put it onto their plates. My Abuelita always told me that the way to somebody's heart is the food you feed them. In Issue 6, we talk about food, its importance to us as people and how it affects our lives positively and negatively. I hope that by reading this issue, the audience is captivated by the stories of each individual who wrote about their personal experiences with food. Readers will also read about the way food has impacted our communities within.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Jasmine' with a small crown icon above the letter 'i'.

Assistant Video Editor

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# A Love Letter to Borscht

## Embracing culture through flavor

BY EDWARD SEGAL

I am upstairs in my room doing homework when I smell it: borscht cooking on the stove. The sweet smell of the beet soup wafts through our apartment, letting me know it's time for dinner. I run down the stairs as soon as my mom says it's time to eat. My dad is already at the table, excited to see which type of borscht she made.

I grab a slice of white bread. I dip it in the borscht, soaking up the flavor of the soup for me to enjoy between spoonfuls.

As a kid, I always devoured the broth but left all the vegetables in the bowl. As I grew older, I stopped separating the ingredients. In this sense, borscht represented my growth into adulthood. Little by little, I trained myself not to be picky and to be grateful for what I have.

We ate borscht on holidays, but did not reserve it for special occasions. No matter what the calendar said, borscht was always on the menu.

Borscht is a dish that is over a millennium old. It evolved from something eaten only by the "rural poor," according to Alexander Lee from History Today, to a meal enjoyed by the rich and the poor alike. People from different regions added ingredients available to them to replace those they did not have, and created new versions for various occasions.

The soup can be made with meat depending on preference. There is also cold borscht, which is made with apples and cucumbers. It is typically served during the summer. Then there is green borscht, which is made with spinach and can be cooked without beets.

This dish is popular among Eastern European Jews, many of whom cook red borscht during Passover and cold borscht during Shavuot, a festival celebrating the creation of the Torah.

But the beet soup is most commonly associated with Ukraine, where, according to UNESCO, it is considered a national dish. Borscht is a symbol of unity in the country,

bringing family members together in much the same way the ingredients are mixed in a pot.

Food has always brought people together. Sharing a meal helps us form a community, and offers those who have nothing in common a reason to gather. Food also brings families together, giving each person a reason to come out of their room and sit at the table with their parents and siblings.

Food is passed down from generation to generation, and travels from country to country as people move around the world. New dishes form when people combine their recipes with those from other cultures, or when they discover new ingredients to substitute for old ones.

The history of any part of the world can be told through food. The United States has a wide variety of foods we call ours from many parts of the world: foods like pizza that made their way here through colonization and immigration.

In France, the baguette, which contains wheat flour, water, yeast and salt as its only ingredients, tells the story of how Napoleon created sustenance for the French army in the 19th century, or at least perpetuates the myth of its creation.

In Haiti, a soup called *joumou* tells the story of the nation's slave revolt against the French colonizers in the 18th century. Once reserved for French plantation owners on the island, the soup was claimed by the Haitians after the successful revolution. It became a symbol of the country's independence.

Food has been traded throughout the world for millennia, leading to the creation of dishes that were not possible before a country acquired a certain ingredient.

Each country has its own unique cuisine that tells the story of its ups and downs, its historic achievements and its cultural traditions.

For me, as a person of Russian-Jewish descent, borscht was always that food.



# CAJUN SEAFOOD PASTA

(SUBSTITUTE WITH CHICKEN)

8 ounces fettuccine pasta  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 pound medium shrimp  
(peeled and deveined)  
2 tablespoons Cajun seasoning.  
8 ounces lump crab meat  
8 ounces lobster meat.  
1/2 cup baby scallops  
1 cup andouille sausage (diced)  
1/2 cup yellow onion (diced)  
2 garlic cloves (minced)  
1 cup shrimp stock  
(substitute chicken or veggies stock)  
1 cup heavy cream  
3/4 cups of tomato sauce  
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 tablespoon lemon juice



Chef Thai

- Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
- Add oil to a large skillet over medium-high; tilt to coat skillet.
- Add Cajun seasoning in a medium bowl to coat. Toss together shrimp, lobster meat, crab meat and scallops.
- Add Cajun seasoning to a medium pan. Add seafood mix to skillet; cook until opaque, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer the seafood mix to a plate.
- Add onion, celery, and garlic to skillet; cook, stirring often, until onion is tender, about 3 minutes. Add chicken stock; stir to loosen browned bits from the bottom of the skillet. Stir in heavy cream, parmesan, pepper, cajun seasoning, tomato sauce, lemon juice, salt and cayenne. Cook, stirring often, until thickened, 4 to 5 minutes. Add cooked pasta; toss to coat. Top with seafood mix; sprinkle with scallions.

— Courtesy of Chef Thai @Chef\_Thai951

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# *Eating Intuitively:*

## **a college athlete's experience overcoming negative food habits**

WRITTEN BY BRANDON SARMIENTO

**D**uring my years of running collegiate track and field, I developed an unhealthy relationship with food that was rooted in a negative body image and amplified by the practice of tracking everything I consumed.

I needed to know the exact number of calories, carbohydrates, grams of protein, and fat in everything I ate. It didn't matter if it was the syrup I poured on pancakes or the bland chicken and rice I prepped for lunch: I wasn't going to eat it unless I knew the nutritional facts.

This habit started with good intentions. I wanted to optimize my diet for my performance as a runner. I never expected that I would take it too far and turn calorie tracking into an obsession that shone a light on insecurities I was in denial of.

Although I was never diagnosed with an eating disorder, my relationship with nutrition turned my seemingly healthy

lifestyle as a runner into one tainted by an insatiable craving to eat a certain way to achieve a certain look in the mirror.

From 2018 to 2020, I weighed 120 pounds at the most and dropped as low as 114 pounds during my two seasons of running track at Ventura College. Since I was a sprinter, I trained with the mindset that gaining weight would only slow me down in the short-distance races I competed in. My obsession with tracking food brought that ideology to the extreme as I began to lose weight, likely from overestimating how many calories I ate while underestimating how many calories I burned. Sometimes, I would intentionally cut back on food as a response to seeing any sort of tummy bulge, tricep flab, or anything on my body that signified I was gaining weight.

What I feared most was gaining unwanted fat on this skinny frame I've been insecure about forever. It

didn't help that my team's uniform of a tight-fitting track jersey with compression shorts accentuated the shape of any runner's body. This made me worried about my physical appearance as much as my athletic performance.

Looking back, I think my rational self would realize that putting on more weight wouldn't have hurt. My insecurities with my body image made it difficult to recognize that truth. Instead, I fixated on what I ate to ensure that I wasn't losing what little muscle I had or gaining any fat.

When I or my family cooked at home, I always pulled out my mini scale to weigh every single gram of food and drink I prepared so that I could accurately input the number of calories, protein, carbohydrates and fat into my calorie-tracking app. If I was eating out, I was busy reading an online pdf of the restaurant's nutrition info while my



family looked at the regular menu.

Taking at least one of these precautions was a ritual for me and if I didn't do it, I would be reluctant to take a single bite no matter how hungry I was. Eating began to feel like a chore, rather than a relaxing time to enjoy a meal with friends and family.

I distinctly remember stressing out about going to a Thanksgiving dinner at my aunt's house because I knew it would be challenging to track all my food while fighting the temptation to binge at the sight of a full dinner table. I also wasn't going to bring my food scale as I knew I'd look silly. I starved myself in the days leading up to Thanksgiving to prepare for potential binge eating.

When the day came, I limited myself to stupidly small portions of food, including my Filipino favorites of lumpia and pancit. I sat there eating, jealous of my family who indulged in every delicacy their plates had room for. No one should leave a Thanksgiving dinner starving, but I did.

Ultimately, my unhealthy relationship with food ended up hurting as much as it may have helped me during my years of running track. Although I became more aware of what a healthy diet looks like and what types of nutrients I should consume to support my performance, that knowledge came at the expense of obsessing over every piece of food that entered my body.

Thankfully, I've reached a point where I eat intuitively based on my hunger levels, rather than letting a calorie-tracking app dictate my diet and body image. I stopped tracking my calories about a year and a half ago after working at a summer camp where I got to disconnect from technology and enjoy the present without the constant distractions from my phone. Going the whole summer without tracking any food made me realize that I didn't need that habit to stay healthy and live peacefully. Nonetheless, going through this stage of nutrition obsession was a big learning lesson that has helped me nurture a healthier relationship with food today.

# It's in the Pantry

CSUN students don't need to go hungry

WRITTEN BY MATTHEW ARAT



**H**ave you ever had to choose between feeding yourself or applying for classes? College students might be strapped for cash, but options like the CSUN Food Pantry can give students both. The Pantry buys food items via monetary donations to give to students at no charge. How important is it for the Pantry to offer food to students?

According to the National Institute of Health, “More than one-third of college students are food insecure nationwide.” Financially under-resourced students, especially ones who receive the Pell Grant, are more likely to be food insecure. The Food Pantry offers food items in large bags at no cost to the student. Students are only allowed one bag per week, but include a wide variety of prepared foods like cereal and soups. Veggies are also included based on availability. Even if the Pantry is closed for some time, they still offer gift cards for

grocery stores in emergency cases.

A survey by the California Student Aid Commission found, “35% of students were classified as food insecure.” This is also the same percentage of students who can afford tuition. Almost one in three students have to face the possibility of whether education or food is more important to them. CalFresh supports the Pantry to allow students enough meals to sustain them for a whole week free of charge. Pantry members even make sure a students’ dietary restrictions don’t prohibit the food given to them.

The CSUN Food Pantry is open from Mon. to Tues. from 9 a.m till 1 p.m and from Weds. to Thurs. 9 a.m till 5 p.m. You can find more information about the Pantry at <https://www.csun.edu/heart/foodpantry>.

# HONEY CHILI GLAZED BLACKENED SALMON

Courtesy of Chef Thai @Chef\_Thai951

- 4-6 fresh salmon filets (6 ounces each)
- 1/2 teaspoon pink salt
- 1/2 black pepper
- Chef Thai all-purpose Cajun seasoning (or your choice).

## SAUCE

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 6 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 1/2 cups honey
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons chili sauce (with flakes)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup green onions
- 1/2 cup cilantro
- 3 tablespoons water
- 4 tablespoons hot sauce
- chopped fresh parsley for garnish



Chef Thai

- Place the garlic, soy sauce, honey, lime juice and black pepper in a small bowl. Stir to combine. Set aside.
- Rub the hot sauce and seasoning mixture to the tops and bottoms of the salmon filets
- Heat a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the vegetable oil and butter. Heat until shimmering.
- Add the salmon seasoned side down and flip to the other side. Cook for 4-5 minutes or until the salmon is seared. Reduce the heat to medium, flip the filets and add the honey lemon sauce to the pan. Cook the salmon for 3-4 minutes, basting it with the sauce. Turn the filets and cook for another few minutes until cooked through. The salmon will flake easily with a fork when done.
- Remove the salmon from the skillet to a serving plate. You can cook the sauce for a few more minutes to reduce, thicken and caramelize if desired. Take care not to burn. Spoon the sauce over the salmon and serve immediately.
- Garnish with green onions and serve with lime wedges.

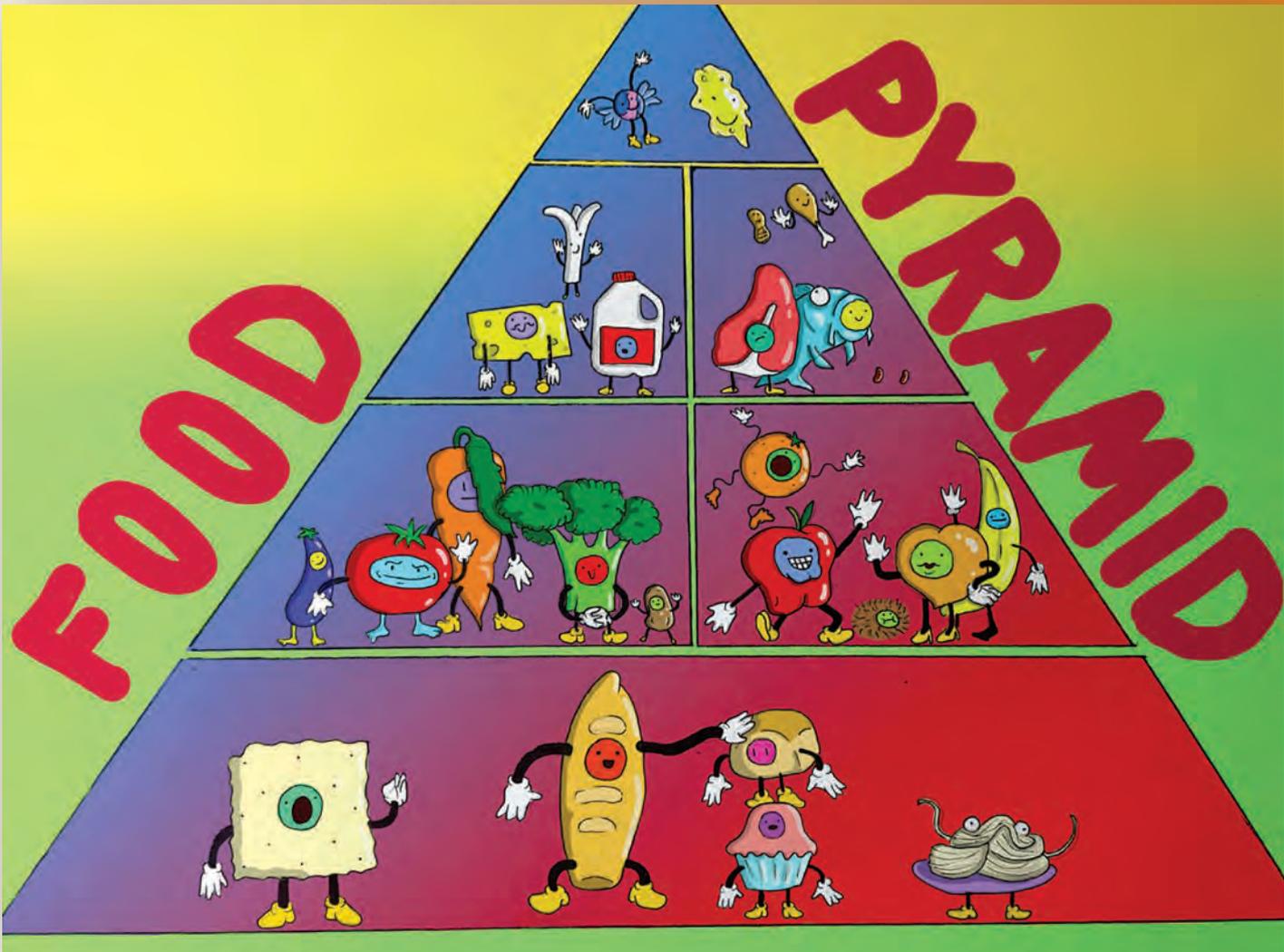


ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MESQUITA

# songs to listen to while you cook!

CREATED BY PAMELA GARCIA

“She’s American” - The 1975

“Late Night Talking” - Harry Styles

“Figure It Out” - Blu DeTiger

“I Like You (A Happier Song)” - Post Malone ft. Doja Cat

“EARFQUAKE” - Tyler, The Creator

“Bohemian Rhapsody” - Queen

“Maniac” - Conan Gray

“Telepatía” - Kali Uchis

“Como La Flor” - Selena

“Me Fui de Vacaciones” - Bad Bunny

“Piel Canela” - Cuco

“Nunca Es Suficiente” - Los Ángeles Azules ft. Natalia Lafourcade

“Propuesta Indecente” - Romeo Santos

“Tití Me Preguntó” - Bad Bunny

# CAN THE COLLEGE STUDENT DIET BE FIXED?

WRITTEN BY OZZY ANGUIANO



I was diagnosed with prediabetes in August. I had some routine blood work done, and my hemoglobin A1C levels came in at 5.8, which meant that in the past three months, my blood sugar levels were high enough to put me on the pipeline to type 2 diabetes. I was scared of a future in which I wouldn't be able to eat my favorite foods, and one where I would add routine blood testing to my daily life.

I was also frustrated because I felt like I did that to myself. I wouldn't have been in that situation if it weren't for my horrible college student diet.

My eating habits took a nosedive for the worst, starting my freshman year at CSUN. College staples like instant noodles replaced the home-cooked Mexican food I was used to back home. I also began eating fast food more than I used to once I began part-timing as a pizza driver. I turned to eating the cheapest fast food meals I could buy practically every day for convenience's sake since I was so busy at school and work.

By my senior year, my college eating habits had earned me an extra 40 pounds, in addition to the prediabetes diagnosis.

I'm not alone in having an unhealthy diet during my time at college. Unhealthy eating habits are common among college students due to high levels of food insecurity. Food insecurity means a lack of access to healthy foods, often because they are expensive or there isn't a nearby store selling fresh food.

"Some students tend to make difficult choices between paying for their tuition, housing, and eating healthy foods," said Eirenel Eclevia, a nutritionist at CSUN's Marilyn Magaram Center for Food Science, Nutrition and Dietetics.

College students turn to unhealthy options when eating healthy food becomes inconvenient. Easy-to-make processed foods are more convenient compared to home cooking. Instant ramen is the ubiquitous college student meal. Most dorm rooms have at least a case of it lying around. Take a look at the Matador Mercados on campus, and you'll find entire shelves of different variants of mac and cheese.

Though cheap and convenient, instant ramen and mac and cheese do not provide all the nutrients a person needs and can be damaging if eaten in excess. A balanced meal consists of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and a protein source. Each food group provides different nutrients the human body needs to stay healthy, such as iron in spinach or Vitamin D in tuna.

According to Eclevia, instant ramen and mac and cheese mainly provide simple starchy carbohydrates. A lack of proper nutrition can lead to health issues. "Inadequate nutrition can lead to many problems, especially developing chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes," said Eclevia.

Fast food is another convenient yet unhealthy college student favorite. Foods like chicken strips and pizza are commonly served by establishments on any college campus. These restaurants are suitable for students who don't pack lunch, and they make for an excellent spot to have a lunch break with some friends. Fast food is notorious, however, for being much less healthy than home-cooked food. The high consumption of fast food is linked to obesity. Eclevia said the one fast food meal often contains a day's worth of calories, carbs, sodium and fat.

Are students just destined to be malnourished until we graduate? Well, when it comes to combating malnutrition, Eclevia says,

*"knowledge is power."*

That statement rang true in my case. After seeing my lab results, I quickly used online resources to learn about the nutritional value of foods and how they affected my body. I was referred to see a dietitian who taught me how to balance my meals. As I became more knowledgeable about nutrition, my diet became more well-rounded, and I'm now at a healthier weight.

There are resources available at CSUN for students seeking nutritional assistance. CSUN students, faculty, or staff can pick up groceries once a week at the CSUN Food Pantry. The pantry will also help students sign up for CalFresh, the state program that offers financial aid for food. For nutrition counseling, students can speak with a dietitian at the Klotz Student Health Center for free or contact the CSUN Marilyn Magaram Center, which hosts nutrition-related events.

Eating healthy may seem expensive and time-consuming for many students, but making meals healthier can be pretty simple and cheap. Just a couple of ingredients could change the nutritional value of a meal. For example, Eclevia recommends adding a vegetable and a protein, such as spinach and an egg, to instant ramen to make it a more balanced meal. Frozen vegetables are a budget-minded option as they tend to be cheaper than fresh ones while retaining the same nutritional value and lasting longer. Eggs, tuna and tofu are good sources of protein that are easy to prepare and can be had for a few bucks.

The stress of college life and the financial stress that comes with it can make it pretty hard to eat healthily, but it's not impossible. With a dose of mindfulness and some help from the various nutrition sources at CSUN, anyone can progress towards a healthy diet.

# SHRIMP & CHEESY GRITS

2 cups chicken stock  
 3 cups whole milk (substitute water)  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
 1 cup ground grits  
 1 cup cream cheese  
 1 cup gouda cheese  
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

**SHRIMP**  
 1 pound jumbo shrimp  
 (peeled and deveined)  
 6 strips of pork bacon  
 (substitute turkey bacon)  
 1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning  
 2 garlic cloves sliced  
 1/2 green onion  
 1/2 white wine  
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

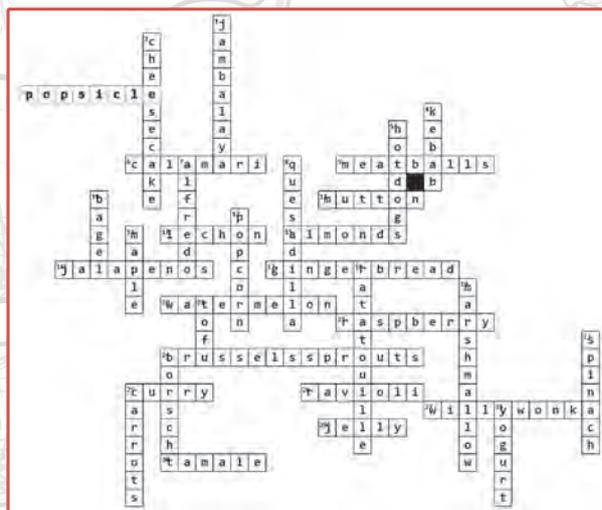
Light salt for (tasted)  
 1/2 teaspoons black pepper  
 1/2 cup sweet peppers  
 (chopped)  
 Hot sauce for taste  
 1/2 cup tomato sauce  
 1 cup heavy cream  
 2 tablespoons scallions  
 (finely chopped)

- In a large skillet over medium heat, sauté bacon until brown and crisp. This may take about 3-5 minutes.
- Remove bacon from skillet and transfer to a plate. Some bacon drippings will be left in the pan (about 3 tablespoons).
- Add about a tablespoon of oil or butter to the pan, followed by shrimp. Then season with Cajun seasoning, and sauté shrimp for about 3-4 minutes. Set aside.
- Then add garlic, paprika, bell pepper, scallion, parsley and green onions to the pan. Add about 1/4 cup of broth or more – adjust to preference. Continue cooking for another 3 minutes.
- Add shrimp towards the last minute with lemon juice if desired, and adjust to taste. Throw in the crisp bacon, and adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper.
- Remove the mix from the heat and serve over grits.

## GRITS

- Start by adding water, milk, bay leaf and salt to a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil.
- Gradually whisk in the grits until you have added them all to the pot. Keep stirring with a whisk to prevent lumps. You may need to remove the saucepan from the stove while getting rid of lumps.
- Reduce heat and cook grits at a bare simmer, covered, frequently stirring until water is fully absorbed and grits thickened. This will take about 15 minutes.
- Then remove grits from heat. Add butter and cheese; stir with a whisk until gouda cheese and cream cheese are melted.
- Assemble the dish by placing the grits at the bottom of a shallow bowl, followed by the Cajun shrimp and sauce on top. Enjoy piping hot!

Courtesy of Chef Thai @Chef\_Thai951

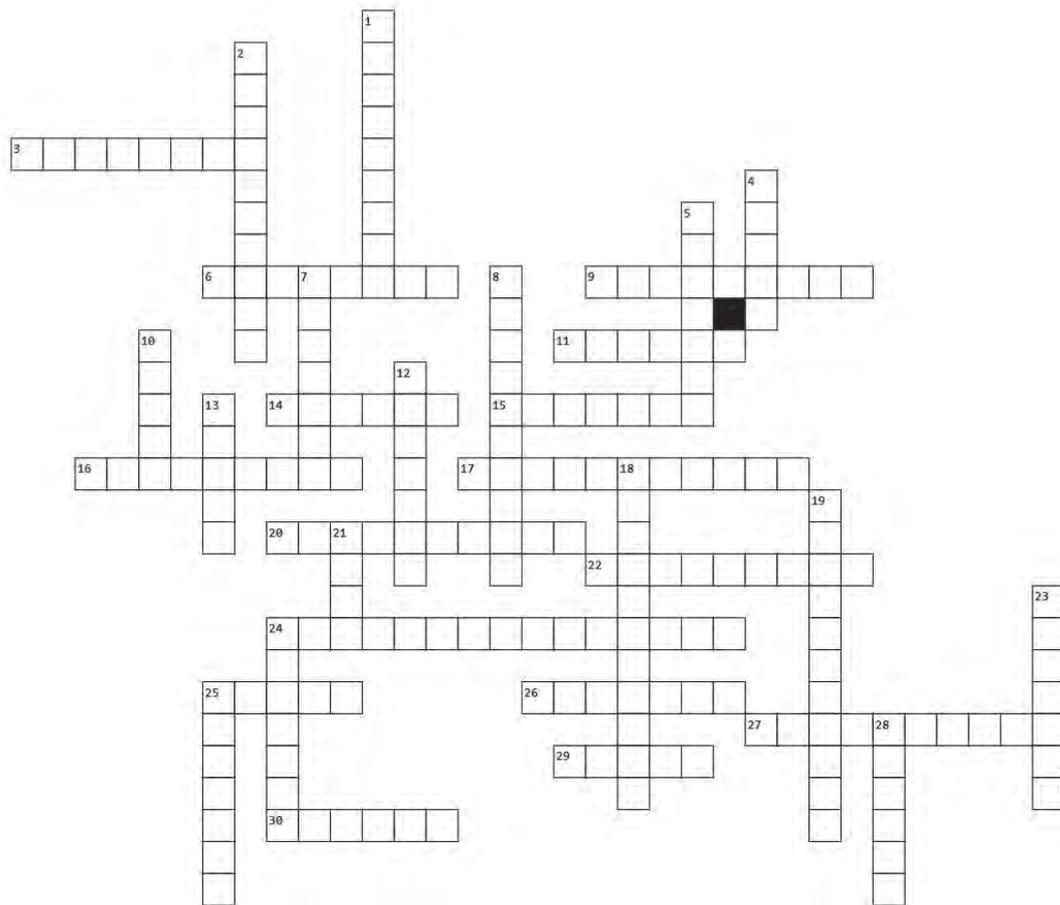


Crossword Puzzle Answers



# Food Crossword

CREATED BY EDWARD SEGAL



## Across

3. Frozen dessert served on a stick
6. Ring-shaped squid dish
9. "Cloudy with a Chance of \_\_\_\_\_"
11. Sheep meat served with cabbage in Norway
14. Filipino dish consisting of a roasted pig with liver sauce
15. Nuts used to make non-dairy milk
16. Spicy peppers that you put on nachos
17. Christmas candy houses are made of this
20. Giant fruit that you eat in the summer
22. Type of red berry
24. The vegetable that everyone hates (2 wds)
25. South Asian sauce-based dish made with lots of spices
26. Italian dumpling filled with cheese, meat or vegetables
27. He owns a chocolate factory where Oompa Loompas work (2 wds)
29. Another word for jam
30. Mesoamerican dish made of masa wrapped in corn husk

## Down

1. American Creole and Cajun rice dish
2. Dairy pie
4. Middle Eastern dish made of meat on a skewer
5. Served at Wienerschnitzel
7. Sauce that goes with shrimp and fettuccine
8. Tortilla filled with cheese
10. Breakfast food served with cream cheese
12. Microwavable snack eaten at the movies
13. Syrup that goes on pancakes
18. Vegetable stew; the name of a movie
19. Goes between chocolate and graham cracker in s'mores
21. Condensed soy milk
23. Popeye the Sailor man eats this
24. Ukrainian beet soup
25. Vegetable that's good for your eyes
28. Dairy treat made through the fermentation of milk

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 📍 Student Recreation Center



**Spring Fest**  
 Thursday, Jan. 26: 3 – 6 p.m.  
 📍 University Student Union



**VRC: Veteran Welcome**  
 Friday, Jan. 27: 4 – 6 p.m.  
 📍 Van Nuys Room



**Swim Challenge**  
 Register starting Feb. 6  
 📍 Student Recreation Center



**In Conversation about The 1619 Project  
 with Nikole Hannah-Jones**  
 Friday, Feb. 10: 3 p.m.  
 📍 Plaza del Sol Performance Hall