Whether you’re cooking for yourself or whipping up a feast for family and friends, you may want to pay attention to the science on how what we eat affects us. Learn what not to feed your guests and why comfort food make us feel so much better when we’re down.

An article in *Psychological Science* found that the taste of the food and drinks that you serve your guests may impact their moral judgments of you in more ways than one.

Psychological scientist Kendall J. Eskine and coauthors from the City University of New York noted that several studies have linked physical disgust to moral disgust, but no study has explored morality in conjunction with taste. In their experiment, students drank either a sweet (Minute Maid Berry Punch), bitter (Swedish Bitters), or control (water) beverage. The volunteers then rated a variety of moral transgressions and filled out additional information, including their political ideology.

The results showed that taste perception significantly affected the study participants’ moral judgments — physical disgust, induced by a bitter taste, elicited feelings of moral disgust. This effect was more pronounced in participants with politically conservative views than in participants with liberal views.
Taken together, these findings suggest that embodied gustatory experiences may impact moral processing more than previously thought.

What we eat impacts not just our morals but our mood too. Why does comfort food make us feel so much better when we’re down? Research published in *Psychological Science* found that comfort food brings up associations of positive relationships and makes us feel less lonely.

Volunteers who thought of chicken noodle soup as comfort food had greater access to relationship related words when they ate a bowl of the soup. In a second experiment, volunteers who had secure attachment styles and wrote about comfort foods did not feel as lonely after belongingness threat (writing about a conflict with a close other).

Whether it’s soup, mashed potatoes, or warm chocolate chip cookies, comfort food fulfills our stomachs and our need to belong.

For more, visit media coverage of this article from *LiveScience*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Daily Mail*. 