

Comfort Foods That Nourish Your Bird

Offering comfort foods to your bird during stressful times can have a positive affect on its health and well being

By Chris Davis

Comfort foods can ease your bird through difficult experiences.
Courtesy Debra Pupo, New York

Recently, my beloved blue-and-gold macaw, Baby, required a trip to the veterinarian's office after bumping her wing. Determining that Baby would be okay after a couple of weeks, the vet prescribed some medication and painkillers. My husband and I were scheduled to go out of town later that afternoon, but our vet was concerned that our bird sitter would not be able to medicate Baby. I assured him that she could use Baby's favorite comfort foods as vehicles for the medication.

We provide Baby with comfort foods, such as mashed up bananas mixed with peanut butter, cooked squash or baby food from a jar, during times of stress or just when we want to give her extra attention. Baby enjoys these treats, it offers us a bonding experience and it also ensures us that we have a food item that can be used to properly medicate her during sickness. It's a good idea to have one of these types of foods on hand for your own bird. Soft foods, such as a piece of a waffle or a Cheerio work best to absorb the medicine. Also, knowing your bird's favorite foods means that you probably know which items he's more likely to eat while sick or stressed, therefore ensuring a better recovery.

Offering these foods during times of illness or stress can profoundly and positively affect her physical health and well-being. Spoon-fed baby food might return a bird to a time that it felt secure and life was predictable. This state of bliss allows you to slip in that medication or other nutrients.

Baby is fine now. Our house-sitting friend was able to medicate her and help her feel better. Incidentally, Baby enjoyed her ride home from the vet's office after being injected with a painkiller that seemed to completely take away her pain. She made weird cooing sounds that graduated into a louder giggle. She sounded exactly like a good-natured person with a low alcohol tolerance who had just enjoyed a couple of margaritas. Baby, it seemed, was happily drunk. We laughed hysterically along with her.

There are other situations, besides medicating, that warrant the use of comfort foods. Comfort foods can ease your bird through difficult experiences, such as moving; the death, injury or illness of a loved one (human or animal); a change in the type of cage or its location; her people going through personal difficulties and other disruptions and challenging situations that are part of normal human and animal life. These can all be more tolerable with the help of comfort foods.

Bird Comfort Foods

Try offering your bird some of these comfort foods. To see our list. [Click Here >>](#)

Periodically offering comfort foods, even when things are going well, is a wonderful way to more intensely "connect" with your avian family member, in the same way we use foods to connect with human friends and family. Why do you think family reunions always feature certain special dishes? Often, they reflect strong cultural roots. A Norwegian friend of mine loved fish paste — something I could not fathom — and she ate it right out of the tube. She felt largely the same about my California foods fixation, but we both had a meeting of the minds and taste buds when it came to anything chocolate!

Birds also have differing ideas of what they consider comfort foods, depending on their situation. When determining which foods your bird would find most comforting at a particular time, it helps to remember there are varying levels of comfort foods.

The most basic of comfort foods for birds and humans do not require much mouth work. These are often warm, soft, relatively bland, easily digested and may have a hint of sweetness. Sounds like baby formula, right? If it's possible, find out what your bird was fed as baby. Most birds will like eating those foods they were raised on. If not, experiment. Oatmeal, mashed sweet potatoes or yams and fruit blends seem to be favorites of most birds.

Baby foods should be saved for emergencies, but some everyday foods can also provide comfort. These can include commercial bird food mixes, cakes, bars, berries and pellets as well as favorite fruits and vegetables, cereals and other

healthful human foods. Providing a piece of a particularly relished treat bar or slice of a favorite fruit, maybe apple, offer a bird a sense of daily security and general well-being.

Other comfort foods might provide an element of fun for your bird, such as those with various textures, including carrot sticks, in-shell nuts, pea pods and sunflower seeds. These foods take time to eat and duplicate social foraging in the wild, which can bring enjoyment and happiness to your bird's day.