

# Cardiovascular Wellness Program Newsletter

Issue 35 -  
March 2026

## Comments from Linda

We are at the mid-point of the spring semester and things are humming along very nicely. Our students this semester are interested, interesting and engaged in things. I am enjoying seeing them getting more & more involved. They all want to cook this semester – how lucky for us!

We have lots of new folks, we just had a successful donation drive (thanks so much folks for stepping up there!) Please do speak up with any thoughts or ideas about things. As always, I feel like I am riding a wave with our program, and I am always grateful for how well things are going. Thanks everyone!

*Linda*

I am getting a head-start on my laughter talk for April. A few jokes:

**How does garlic seduce each other?** They take off their cloves

**What do you call someone who has been raised by garlic?** Garlic bred

**Rest in peace, garlic.** You will be minced.

**It took Gandhi over a month to cross the Alps barefoot, no washing, worn out, and survived only on garlic. He was a...** Super-calloused fragile mystic, extra halitosis.

## CWP Newsletter

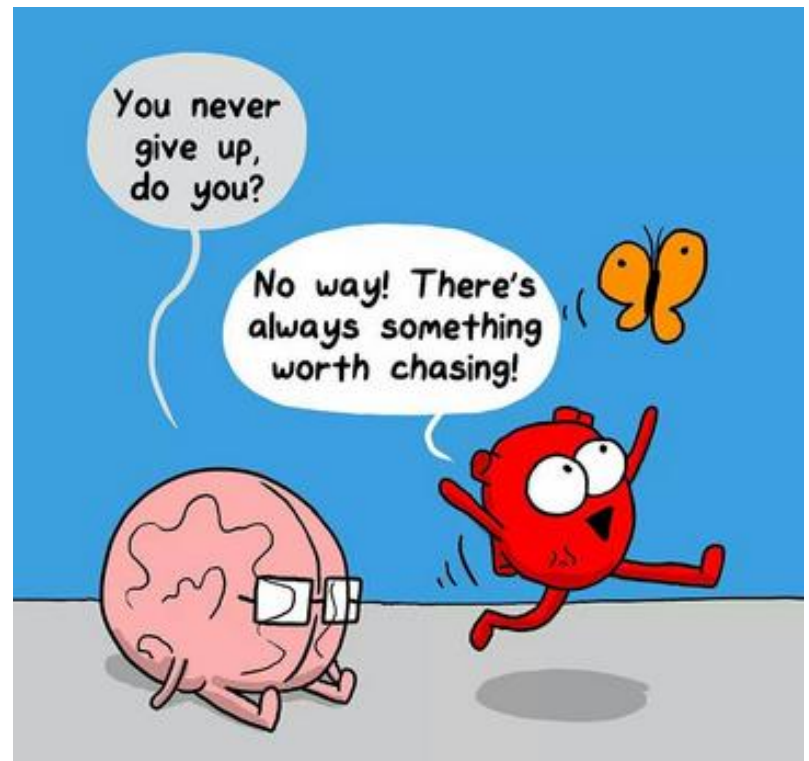
This newsletter is created quarterly with a primary intent of reaching those we have not seen lately. If you would like to receive a hard copy in the mail, please let me know. Call and leave a message (916-278-4402) or send an email:

[csuscwvwellness@gmail.com](mailto:csuscwvwellness@gmail.com)

Prior issues are archived on our webpage  
<https://cardiovascularwellnessprogram.org/newsletter>

## Included in this issue:

Program Coordinator Notes, Linda Paumer, MA  
CWP Projects  
Exercise Reminders, Linda Paumer  
Nutrition Notes, Debbie Lucus, RD  
Universe in Rose Petal, Linda Larsen, RN  
Recipe Corner  
Brain Games: Rebuses



## **CWP Projects**

I appreciate greatly that you all know the continued interaction of our older adult clients with the younger generation, the Sac State students, is an integral part of our program. Your involvement with the students is always requested (in whatever fashion suits you). The students this semester are especially interactive and we have had some great activities already. More coming for sure before the semester ends!

### **Current projects (Spring 2026):**

1) Soon to be unveiled will be an outcome data collection project. If you are coming in for in-person sessions, you likely will be asked to fill out a brief survey about your exercise routines and also do some simple balance/functional assessments. You'll learn where you stand with respect to how your activities are helping you and you will help us with data collection. (Of course, you are free to decline participating.)

2) We have two gero students (Tia & Emily) who are brewing a story-sharing project – look for some sessions with them coming in April. They will be posting a survey very soon to gain insights for directions for these sessions. Another two gero students (Cassidy and Jazmine) will be helping them, gaining insights for a project they might like to do also.

3) We now have a regular host of PT students, led by Justin & Yesmenia this semester, coming in on Friday afternoons for our 2:30 pm balance activities session. Very helpful and greatly appreciated.

4) We continue to have student involvement with research students (ID201) as well as community nutrition and psychology students. We are trying recipes out in the kitchen almost every day we're there, including Fridays. We're making music together and have craft projects in mind. Some of these students will be involved with the functional assessments mentioned above.

5) New this semester is student involvement with students who are taking an introductory social work class (SW95). Linda Goode, our resident LCSW, has stepped up to get involved here and we look forward to seeing what these students bring in.

6) We have many nursing students dropping in. They have learned that hanging out with us is a great way to get some hands-on clinical experience. Thanks so much to everyone who lets their BP get taken multiple times each day!

7) Several of our clients continued to participate with me and gero students in both gero 11 and gero 103 service learning. Your input to these students is greatly appreciated. You should be seeing announcements for these in the email reminders about the daily schedule.

### **Past Projects**

We have been brewing a project with Kim Roberts and her team of psychology research students about gaming and cognition. You are likely to hear more about this before summer.

## Exercise Reminders *from Linda Paumer*



The month of March our educational focus was brain health. We did learn a lot about taking care of our brains and of course you could visit our YouTube page and see what you missed if you didn't attend any of those sessions.

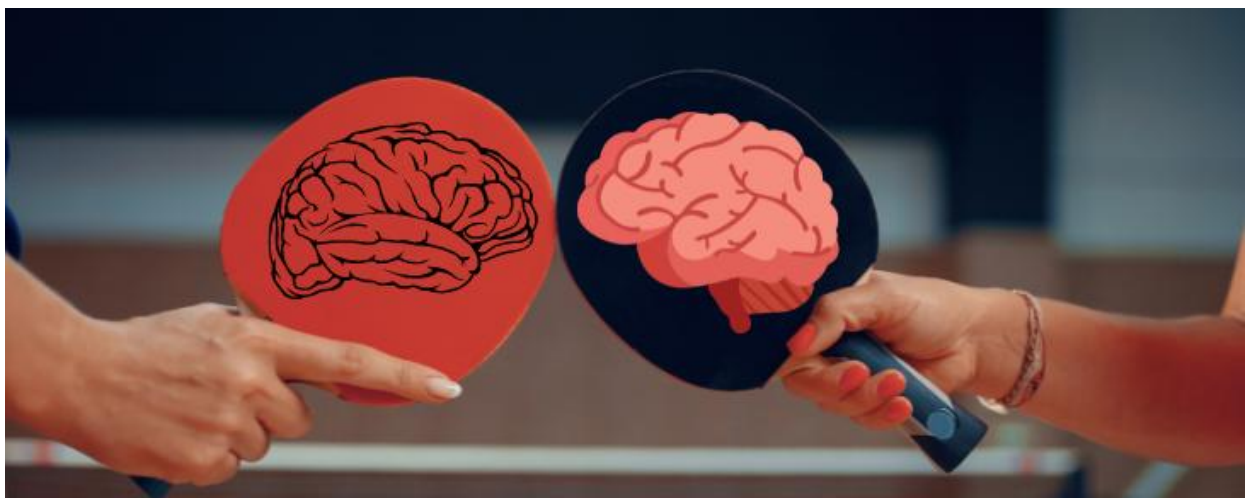
Regarding exercises for your brain, that involves both physical and mental exercise. Some notes on that:

**Aerobic Exercise** Aerobic activities such as brisk walking, running, cycling, and swimming are consistently recommended for brain health. These exercises increase blood flow to the brain, delivering oxygen and nutrients that stimulate the release of growth factors like BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor), which supports neuron growth and survival. Regular aerobic exercise has been shown to improve memory, enhance learning, increase hippocampal volume, and reduce stress by lowering cortisol while boosting endorphins. Hopefully you are doing 20–30 minutes, three to four times a week. This is considered very beneficial to cognitive as well as cardiovascular function.

**Strength Training** Resistance or weight training also supports brain health. Studies indicate that strength training can improve executive function, attention, and memory. It promotes the release of neurotrophic factors and enhances brain plasticity, complementing the benefits of aerobic exercise. And it helps you physically, contributing to balance and function. Another beauty of strength training is you don't need a lot of it -- 2-3 times a week with routines that take 15-20 minutes are all you really need.

**Mind-Body Exercises** Low-intensity exercises like yoga and tai chi combine physical movement with mental focus, improving balance, coordination, and cognitive flexibility. These practices reduce stress, enhance mood, and may support neurogenesis in brain regions associated with problem-solving and memory.

At our aging brain talk, we talked about open-skill activities, which are things that have an active, changing component, requiring perception, decision-making and adaptability because the environment is changing—the environment or other players dictate the time and need for movement. Examples include sports like soccer and basketball, where players must react to opponents' movements and changing conditions; table tennis (ping pong) is another excellent example. Coordinative challenging exercises in changing environments do seem to be beneficial to cognitive function. (If anyone has a ping pong table they'd like to donate, talk to me!)



## Mental Exercise is Good Too

Engaging in mentally stimulating activities such as jigsaw puzzles, card games, learning new vocabulary, or playing strategy games strengthens memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. These exercises recruit multiple cognitive abilities and can help protect against age-related cognitive decline. There are multiple ways to find these activities and I hope you are all sharing choices with each other. I have included some rebus puzzles at the end of this newsletter—Cari brings lots of those in for us to try. The ones here are theoretically on the “tricky” side – some of them do require you to think like a Brit.

There are several places to find these types of activities online. A few sites are listed below and I appreciate any others sources you might share with me.

<https://www.gamesforthebrain.com/>

<https://solitaired.com/free-games>

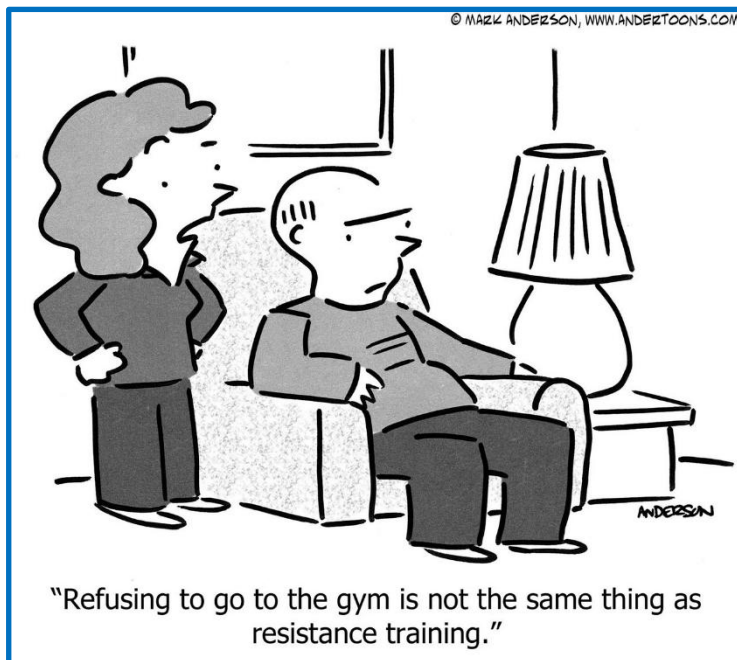
<https://www.aarp.org/games/>

There is always the encouragement to try new things, engage in lifelong learning, and keep socially connected. When you’re socializing, your brain isn’t just on autopilot. It’s firing on all cylinders, processing information, responding to cues, and juggling emotions—all in real-time. Every conversation, whether casual or complex, engages several parts of the brain. This multitasking keeps your brain active and forces it to perform high-level cognitive functions. So, keep those conversations going!

## Practical Recommendations

For optimal brain health, a diverse exercise routine is recommended:

- Aerobic exercise: 20–30 minutes, 3–4 times per week
- Strength training: 2–3 sessions per week
- Mind-body practices: 1–2 sessions per week
- Cognitive challenges: Daily or several times per week



"Thinking really hard about joining the gym is mental exercise!"

# Garlic, Honkers and Brain Health

by Debbie Lucas, MS, RD, CDCES

I love listening to audiobooks while I drive or when I walk alone. But I am admittedly cheap, so only get my audiobooks from the library. That means that sometimes I have to put the audiobooks on hold until they become available. There are times when I am in between books so that is when I catch up on my podcasts. I thought I'd share with you some of the fun and interesting things I've learned in the last few weeks while I wait for my next audiobook.

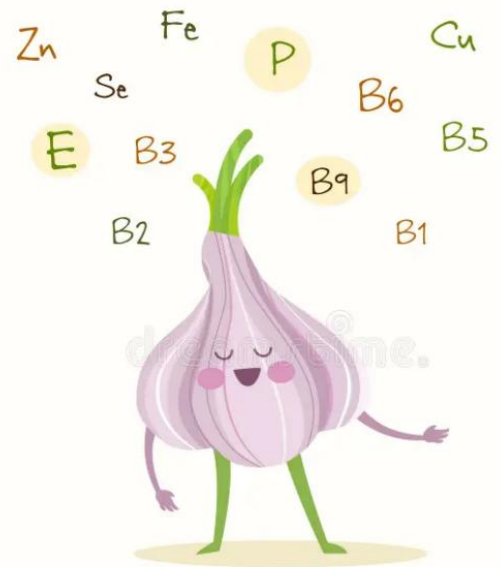
If you have never listened to podcasts, it is very easy.

There is likely a free podcast app already on your cell phone. You can also get them through your Amazon Prime membership if you have that. Lest you think you are too old for this type of technology, know that my nearly 92 year old mom likes to listen to her Kelly Ripa podcast when she is walking alone. Ask me, your grandkids or any of the students at CWP if you need help with finding them.

Not surprisingly, I tend to listen to podcasts about vegan lifestyles and health. One of my favorites is [The Exam Room](#) podcast by Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM). I particularly like this because it is science-based and the PCRM medical director, Dr. Neal Barnard, is often interviewed, as well as other scientists on their staff and various interesting doctors and people in the plant-based world. They also reference the studies they discuss and give a link to them on their website. I loved the recent podcast on garlic. It seems that compounds in garlic are antioxidants that also teach the body to make more of its own defense systems which includes cancer-fighting chemicals and protection from bacteria and viruses. As if that weren't enough, garlic also helps to lower our LDL and improve blood pressure. A review of 39 randomized clinical trials, showed that garlic lowered total cholesterol by 17 mg/dl and LDL by 9 mg/dl. And all this with just one clove a day! So let's add garlic to everything!

## Science of Farts

When you listen to podcasts, you start to see some of the plant-based gurus making the rounds on all the podcasts as well as spin off to a podcast of their own. That is true of Dr. Will Bulsiewicz (Dr. B for short). He is the author of *Fiber Fueled*, the *Fiber Fueled Cookbook* and his most recent, *Plant-Powered Plus*. His specialty is gastrointestinal health (GI). He has started his own podcast, [The Gut Insiders](#). A recent podcast was fun and educational: *The Science of Farts*. As you can imagine, there were a lot of laughs but also some take-home info. First of all, there are different names around the world for farts: Canada – air biscuit, Ireland – booter, UK – wind from the arse, South Africa – a skater, New Zealand – a bottom burp, Australia – a honker.



That was fun, but the key take-aways were tips to ease the gas issue:

1. Increase fiber slowly so that your microbiome can adapt
2. Cut back on Sulphur-rich foods (which cause a lot of the smell in gas) like eggs, meat, garlic and onions
3. Reduce sugar alcohols – often added to sugar-free foods
4. Beware of fermentable foods, such as lactose, beans, wheat and barley – these aren't bad foods, but if you struggle with smelly gas after these, refer to #1 & #8.
5. Eat slowly and chew thoroughly
6. Skip gum and carbonated drinks – they add to the air you swallow
7. Move after meals – try a 'fart walk'
8. Try Beano or other anti-gas helpers. Full disclosure: I may have a problem in this area and while I have suggested Beano to patients for years, I have never used it myself. I'm going to give it a try.

And in case you wondered, it is meat and eggs that are the number one cause of smelly gas and women actually have the stinkier air biscuits. Who would have thought?

## **Brain Talk**

Another favorite podcast is *Your Brain on.....* This is by Drs. Dean and Ayesha Sherzai. They are epic neurologists and on this podcast they often interview well-known doctors, dietitians, and scientists who are experts in the topic they have for that day. This podcast also includes the links to the studies they mention. Your Brain on Vascular Dementia was an interesting one. They interviewed esteemed cardiologist, Columbus Batiste. Did you know that the brain uses 25% of our body's energy? If we aren't getting oxygen and blood flow to the brain because our small blood vessels are damaged, we're in trouble. Dementia doesn't start with memory loss, it starts decades earlier in the blood vessels. Per this podcast, our brain blood vessels are slowly damaged over the years by high blood pressure, uncontrolled cholesterol, poor sleep, inflammation and chronic stress day after day for years. They feel that having a blood pressure cuff at home is one of the best things to do to help reduce risk related to blood pressure. They also state that many people with vascular dementia also have elevated cholesterol and diabetes – which are manageable with lifestyle and medication. In addition to managing those chronic diseases, Dr. Batiste suggests eating dark green leafies, berries and legumes/beans. He also promoted garlic for blood pressure as mentioned in that previous podcast. For foods to avoid, he lists processed red meats and red meat, ultra-processed foods and sugary refined carbohydrates. Not surprisingly, he promotes exercise too, both cardio and resistance training.

Other “Your Brain On...” topics include: Ozempic, Cheese, Chemotherapy, Eating Meat, Parkinson's and many, many more.

I encourage you to check out these and other podcasts. There can be a lot of misinformation out there, so be sure that the ones you listen to are providing valid information. You can select the podcast and go to their page, then scroll down to ratings and reviews. I like to go to an episode, and make sure they have listed references.

Happy listening!!

# Mindful Self Compassion and Love

By Linda M, Larsen, RN-BC, RYT



Family-related, health-related, and world-related events all affect our life. “Interbeing is the understanding that nothing exists separately from anything else. We are all interconnected.” Thich Nhat Hanh said it best. I’m thinking about my health and the intersections of my life related to health as I turn 70 this year. We can’t turn the clock back, but we can do our best today to make tomorrow a positive experience. My husband and I are intending a downsizing move to Sonoma County to enable us to have a home and yard that will be better suited for us in this new phase of our lives and to be close to the ocean which we both love. This process has reminded me that nothing in this world is permanent and how grateful I am for my mindfulness practice. Each time the emotions, thoughts and physical sensations of this major change start to overwhelm me, by paying attention on purpose with curiosity one by one they start to relax, soften, and sometimes go away leaving me more calm and at ease. Mindfulness defined by Diana Winston of UCLA: “Paying attention to our present moment experiences with openness and curiosity and a willingness to be with what is;” this quote sometimes plays on repeat in my mind! When/if I remember to observe the erraticism of my thoughts, especially of how many factors this move process demands, and what I am letting go of here in Sacramento, I’m better prepared to pass through obstacles without becoming overly agitated or anxious.

My years of meditation practice allow me to (sometimes over time, eventually!) assess what’s happening, recognize options and make better choices. While research is ongoing, meditation is

believed to support neuroplasticity by promoting the growth of new brain cells and connections, creating functional changes in the brain regions responsible for attention, emotional regulation, and memory. Self-compassion allows me to recognize that ups and downs are natural, not signs of failure. Suppressing, over-identifying, and pushing away painful feelings only increases suffering. (see graph) Self-compassion is a powerful way of mindfully looking at the situation and behaviors and allows us to “be” with life as it is. Acknowledging pain in the present moment increases gratitude, optimism and happiness. \*



If you’d like to be better able to stay motivated and focused on your “here and now” experiences, try some simple practices. If none of the below interest you, I always encourage practicing the deep abdominal or diaphragmatic breath when dealing with anxiety during difficult or stressful situations. Deep exhalation activates the vagus nerve, which stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system -- decreasing heart rate, lowering blood pressure, releasing muscular tension and it can even help lower emotional reactivity.

**Daily Intention:** In the morning, set your day’s intention, it could be as simple as choosing a theme of kindness, gratitude, acceptance or letting go. Setting a daily intention gives us an anchor or touchstone that we can come back to when we start feeling stressed. Follow this with your meditation practice, 5-30 minutes. Consistent practice with persistent return to the focus is what promotes the growth of new brain cells and connections to stay in the present moment.

**Daily Reflection:** If you choose not to have a meditation practice, try reading scripture and or prayer. Dan Buettner has found that “People in Blue Zones tend to belong to a faith-based community. Individuals of faith who regularly attend a faith-based service live 4 to 14 years longer than their counterparts who do not.” In the evening, take time to reflect on the day’s events, working to accept what went well, what to let go of, and what can be improved. This bedtime reflection helps prevent carrying yesterday’s burdens into tomorrow.

“The Only Thing That Is Constant Is Change -  
— Heraclitus

**For more in depth on Mindfulness and Change:**

<https://consultqd.clevelandclinic.org/mindfulness-to-cope-with-uncertainty>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindfulness-insights/202103/4-ways-mindfulness-traits-and-practices-build-resilience>

<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/war-and-peace-mind>

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-set-intentions>

\*<https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/SCtheoryarticle.pdf> (pg 88-89)

Answers To Rebuses on Back Page

- |                  |               |                     |                 |                       |                   |              |                  |              |                  |                  |                   |                  |
|------------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Rebus puzzles 10 | 1 - Telescope | 2 - One night stand | 3 - Eye sockets | 4 - Houseplant        | 5 - Neighborhood  | 6 - Failure  | 7 - Headquarters | 8 - Blanket  | 9 - Cut corners  | 10 - Cocktail    | 11 - Tennis shoes | 12 - Summary     |
| Rebus puzzles 11 | 1 - Teacup    | 2 - Fly screen      | 3 - Metaphor    | 4 - Leftover/Turnover | 5 - Bad influence | 6 - Backhand | 7 - Sunken       | 8 - Wise guy | 9 - Stay indoors | 10 - Crystallize | 11 - Elbow        | 12 - New Zealand |



# Heather's Garlic Mashed Potatoes & Golden Gravy

By Heather McDougal <https://plantbasednutritionforlife.com/2023/11/06/heathers-garlic-mashed-potatoes-and-creamy-golden-gravy/>

## Ingredients

- 4 large Yukon Gold potatoes
- 2 cloves garlic
- ¼ cup unsweetened, unflavored plant milk
- Several twists of freshly ground white pepper
- Dash of sea salt

## Directions

**4 servings**

Peel the potatoes and chop into chunks. Place in a stainless pan with water to cover. Add the whole garlic cloves. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover, and cook for 15 minutes, until potatoes are tender. Drain.



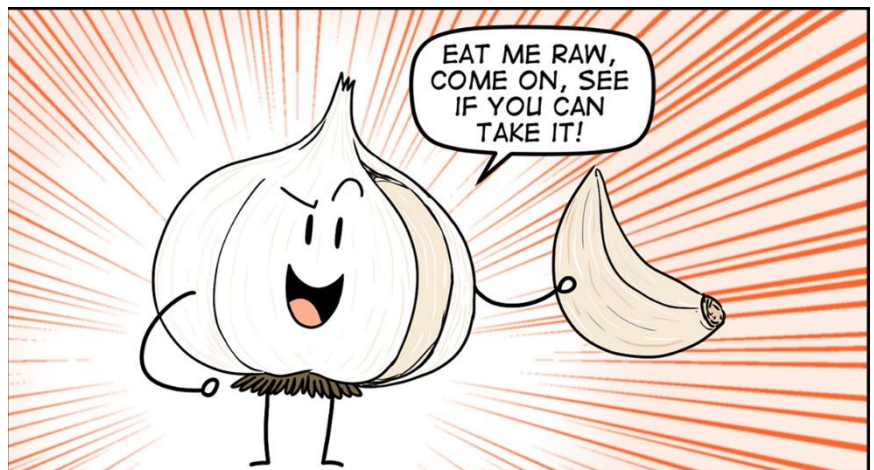
Mash in the pan, using electric beaters or a hand masher, adding the remaining ingredients as necessary to get a smooth consistency and a delicious flavor.

## Creamy Golden Gravy

*The gravy can be made ahead and refrigerated. It will thicken slightly more as it chills. To reheat, place in a saucepan, add a small amount of water, whisk to combine, and then heat slowly, stirring occasionally.*






- 2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- ¼ cup brown rice flour
- freshly ground black pepper

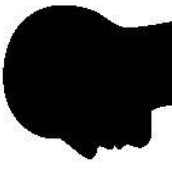


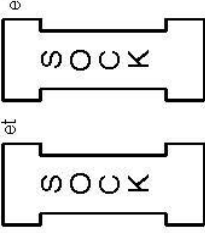


To make the gravy, place all ingredients except the pepper in a small saucepan. Stir well to mix. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until smooth and thick. Season with pepper to taste. Serve at once.





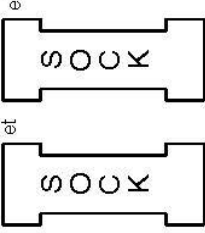


# REBUS PUZZLES 10


scope	  		<p>One <b>3</b> st&amp;</p>
-------	---	---	---------------------------------

House		 	 
-------	---	--	--

 25%	  <b>ET</b>		 
---	---	---	--



 	  issues   issues issues   issues issues   issues issues   issues issues   issues		Mary + <u>Mary</u> =
--	---	---	----------------------------

# REBUS PUZZLES 11

teac		meta meta meta meta
------	---	------------------------------

 	<b>FLUBADENCE</b>	
---	-------------------	---

	<b>YYY GUY</b>	
---	----------------	--

	<b>B O W</b>	
---	--------------	---