

Your favorite foods came from immigrants

By **SOPHIE MURRAY**
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Take a second to think about your favorite foods. Burgers? Hot dogs? Fries? These foods feel as American as it gets, like they’ve always been part of the culture.

But here’s the thing. They didn’t actually start here.

During a time when immigration is one of the most debated and polarizing issues in the U.S., with headlines about deportation, border control and ICE, people need to start understanding that much of our everyday life and culture is shaped by immigrants.

Food is one of the clearest, most universal examples of that influence. In fact, many of the foods people associate with the U.S. only exist in their current form because of immigrants who brought their traditions with them and adapted them over time.

Food is something we all share. We need it to survive. But beyond that, it’s one of the most powerful ways we connect — with culture, with history and with each other. For as long as people have argued about borders and who belongs where, they’ve been enjoying certain foods because someone, somewhere, brought it from their home.

And yet, in today’s political climate, those same communities are often targeted and reduced to problems that need to be solved, rather than recognized as people who have long contributed to the foundation of this country.

That’s why it’s so important to recognize them in the most human way: through the foods we eat. Because every bite of what we call “American” tells a story that started somewhere else.

What’s more American than a Fourth of July cookout? A burger on the grill topped with pickles, lettuce and tomatoes. Fries on the side dipped in ketchup. It feels like the ultimate symbol of American cuisine. But the story behind it all stretches far beyond the U.S.

The hamburger, often seen as the center of American food culture, traces back to German immigrants. It developed from the “Hamburg steak,” a ground meat dish in the 1800s. When this came to the U.S., they adapted the dish by using local ingredients and cooking style. It became what we know today, between a bun topped with cheese, lettuce, tomato and pickles.

Speaking of hamburger toppings, my favorite are definitely pickles. But even something we consider so simple like pickles have deep

immigrant roots, especially in Eastern European Jewish culture.

Specifically kosher pickles were popular in countries like Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Russia. Harsh winters meant people needed to find a way to preserve food for a long period of time. Families would often pack vegetables in an acidic liquid or salt water brine to ferment over periods of time. It added flavor to their otherwise simple diets of bread and potatoes.

When Eastern European Jewish immigrants arrived in New York City, they brought these traditions with them. Pickles were sold on pushcarts in the immigrant tenement district of New York City, introducing America to the kosher dill pickle.

And who doesn’t love pairing their hamburgers with a side of french fries. However, their roots extend far beyond America, or France for that matter. Most historians trace them back to Belgium, where people living along the Meuse River in the late 1600s loved frying small fish.

When winter froze the river and fish weren’t available anymore, they cut potatoes into strips and fried them as a substitute.

Even the potatoes themselves traveled far to reach our plates. Potatoes are originally from the Andes Mountains of Peru and were brought to Europe by Spanish explorers, with new varieties cultivated across the continent over centuries. What feels like such a staple food in American culture is actually a product of centuries of

migration, trade and adaptation.

Ketchup, perhaps the most popular dipping sauce for fries and burgers, tells a similar story. Found in nearly every American home, its earliest ancestor wasn’t even tomato based. In imperial China, as far back as 300 B.C., a fermented fish sauce called “ge-thcup” or “koe-cheup” was made from fish entrails, meat byproducts and soybeans.

British traders discovered it in the early 1700s, bringing it home and inspiring experimental ketchups made from oysters, mushrooms, walnuts, plums and even peaches. By 1812, the tomato based ketchup emerged, eventually becoming the condiment we know today.

Sitting down to enjoy a burger, fries and ketchup, it’s easy to forget the long journey these foods have taken to become “American.” Recognizing their immigrant roots reminds us that culture is never fixed; it is constantly evolving, shaped by the people who bring their skills, flavors and creativity to new places. What feels familiar and comforting, our favorite cookout meals, backyard barbecues and dinner classics were once introduced by people who sought a better life in this country.

So the next time you enjoy that Fourth of July meal, remember: what we call “American” is really a mix of global tradition. Appreciating that history is more than just knowing a fun fact. It’s recognizing the humanity and contributions of the communities that built the culture we celebrate today.

Food, in the end, is one of the most universal ways we connect with the stories and struggles of those who came before us. And if we take the time to notice, every bite can be a small act of gratitude for the people who brought their homes and their recipes to ours.



One small habit getting me through a difficult season

How diamond painting helps me cope

By **GINA LORUSSO**
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Gem by gem, color by color — diamond painting is something that’s helping me get through an already tough start to the year.

Never would I have imagined sitting in my dorm room at the start of my last undergraduate semester, consistently turning to a time-consuming craft to cope with grief.

This past winter break, I experienced a heartbreaking loss in my life that I wasn’t sure how to begin healing from. As someone who has always been private about their struggles, I didn’t find much comfort in talking to others — I found it in diamond paintings. It sounds ridiculous, but it works for me, and it’s something I refuse to be ashamed of.

Diamond paintings, or diamond art, are a color-by-number-style craft that requires you to place different colored gems on a canvas to create a design. The gems, or drills, can be placed either one at a time or in groups onto the adhesive canvas using a special tool.

I picked up this hobby during COVID-19 when I had absolutely nothing else to do except sit in my room and watch Netflix, but it unexpectedly wormed its way back into my life a few weeks ago. Needless to say, I’m so glad it did.

My diamond painting era in 2020 was sparked by boredom. Now, I returned to it with intention and care.

What surprised me most about this was how easily it became a part of my daily routine. In between classes, assignments and other tasks, I find the time to just sit and be present. I didn’t have to force myself into it again — it became a low-pressure habit I look forward to each day and gives me a sense of structure when everything else feels so unbearable.

There’s something grounding about the repetition of placing the gems — the quiet focus it requires leaves little room for intrusive thoughts that could upend an emotionally heavy day. It helps control the ever-present stress and anxiety that I didn’t have to deal with much before now.

To me, it’s all about the environment and making the space comfortable so you can enter a gentle state of mind and be at peace with yourself. Soft lighting, a comfort movie or show in the background and something warm to sip on is all I need to, at least somewhat, reach a place where I can reflect and be content with my healing journey.

Watching the canvas slowly come together with each section feeling like a

small accomplishment, even on days when simply getting out of bed feels like the greatest achievement. Diamond paintings

are tangible progress, not progress that is typically invisible. With every gem I place, it’s proof that time has passed and an effort has been made, even if it was in a quiet way.

Healing comes in moments. Right now, it’s gem by gem, color by color. My diamond paintings aren’t a cure — they’re a pause. Some days are heavier than others, so it’s important to let yourself enjoy something simple that doesn’t need much energy. A gentle activity, such as this one, is choosing softness over that “just push through” mindset when you feel like you can’t.

Many people dismiss crafts as childish or unproductive, but in reality, healing doesn’t have to be productive or looked at as “serious” to be valid. Any way that you find helpful to handle grief is not embarrassing — it only has to make sense to you.

Diamond painting hasn’t fixed everything, but it’s given me space to breathe, and that feels like it’s enough for now. This small habit has given me something to hold onto. It reminds me that healing doesn’t need to be loud gestures; it can be found in even the smallest pockets of peace throughout each day.

So now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a diamond painting to finish.

