

CHECK THE BOX

As New Jerseyans start filing their 2025 State Income Tax, did you know that you can **Check the Box** to donate to Meals on Wheels of New Jersey? We are one of the fortunate non-profit organizations that have this designation and Meals on Wheels Ocean County receives a portion of these funds to continue our mission of mobilizing resources to help older adults achieve food security, maintain independence, & build community.

A charitable giving deduction to the on Wheels of New Jersey Fund provides relief to taxpayers at all income levels who donate to charity and serves as an important lifeline when nonprofits need it most.

With the uncertainty of government funding increasing or even continuing, that leaves Meals on Wheels programs in a precarious position to plan effectively or even continue to serve, all who need Community, Care and Connection. This is despite soaring costs to programs like ours to procure, produce and deliver food to our frail and vulnerable neighbors.

You can Check the Box to the Meals on Wheels of New Jersey Fund and the amount you choose will either reduce your refund or increase your balance due. This makes it easier for generous New Jerseyans to donate while helping to ensure that Meals on Wheels Ocean County can more effectively meet our community needs.

Please Check the Box today or directly donate to Meals on Wheels Ocean County at www.csimow.org.



NOURISHING MOOD IN WINTER

As the days shorten and winter settles in, many adults, particularly older adults, experience changes in mood, appetite, and energy. Seasonal shifts can influence neurochemistry and well-being, making thoughtful nutrition and attentive eating habits especially important for seniors.

A 2025 narrative review concluded that nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids and probiotics—alongside dietary patterns rich in fiber and complex carbohydrates—play a significant role in emotional well-being by supporting brain and gut health.

- Omega-3 fatty acids, found abundantly in fatty fish (e.g., salmon, sardines, mackerel), walnuts, flaxseeds, and chia seeds, are integral to neuronal membrane structure and neurotransmitter function. These fats have been associated with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety and improved cognitive resilience.
- Whole grains such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, and barley supply complex carbohydrates and B vitamins that support steady energy release and neurotransmitter production. Research is still evolving; several studies suggest higher whole-grain intake correlates with more stable mood and reduced anxiety scores.
- Fermented foods—including yogurt with live cultures, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and miso—provide probiotics that help maintain a diverse and balanced gut microbiome. The gut produces many mood-related neurotransmitters and has been linked to diminished stress and improved emotional regulation.

Beyond what we eat, how we eat influences mood and appetite—especially in winter when changes in routine and daylight can affect hunger cues. Mindful eating encourages slowing down, savoring meals, and paying attention to the body's internal signals. This approach can help seniors better recognize hunger and fullness, improve digestion, and derive greater pleasure from food.

Winter can be a season of reflection and renewal. Choosing nutrient-rich foods that support both body and mind, and eating with awareness, equips us to meet the season with resilience and grace.

More Than Meals: Community. Care. Connection

