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Food: Comfort Foods--Classic & Kicked Up

Chefs come from two camps when it comes to comfort foods. Some prefer tried-and-true components that closely sync with diners' childhood memories, while others use traditional comfort constructs as a starting point for their own modern modifications. Most find eager audiences regardless of the path they choose.

By Allison Perlik, Senior Editor

Meatloaf

The new winter menu from Scottsdale, Ariz.-based chain **Z'Tejas Southwestern Grill** features pork-and-beef meatloaf draped in rich gravy. A Cheddar-potato cake and a mélange of wild mushrooms, carrots and baby spinach accompany the home-style entrée.

Chef Peter Pakh of Napa, Calif.'s **Silverado Resort** adapts the homey favorite into a hearty sandwich (l.) built between crusty slices of toasted baguette. Instead of relying on standard ground beef, the thick slices feature venison punched up with hoisin, Worcestershire, sriracha and steak sauces and topped with Asian pepper jelly.



Macaroni and Cheese

Baked French Macaroni and Cheese at **Brasserie Jo** in Chicago delivers ziti tossed with ham and béchamel mixed with Gruyère, Jarlsberg and Parmesan cheeses. The individual cast-iron gratin dishes of pasta are broiled briefly before serving to crisp the tops.

At **Icon Grill** in Seattle, Chef Nick Musser reimagines creamy mac and cheese as snackable deep-fried fritters (shown) served on a bed of crisp cabbage with Smoked Tomato Bacon Rouille and Spicy Jalapeno Con Queso sauces for dipping.



Osso Buco



A sprinkling of gremolata brightens Chef Alessandro Stratta's fork-tender osso buco (shown) at **Wynn Las Vegas' Stratta** restaurant. The braised veal shank crowns creamy saffron risotto.

Osso Buco Lasagna from Executive Chef Moses Cruz at **Oro Restaurant & Bar** in San Antonio layers the “deconstructed” braised shank between sheets of pasta in tomato demi-glace with mirepoix brunoise.

Pot Pie

Chicken pot pie from Denver-based **Boston Market** stars the fast-casual chain’s signature rotisserie chicken along with new potatoes, string beans, peas and carrots. The hearty meal, with cornbread, costs \$5.

At **Parish Foods & Goods** in Atlanta, Executive Chef Tim Magee’s pot pie (shown) strays from standard-issue chicken, peas and carrots. Tender roasted pork is nestled beneath the puff-pastry crust with seasonal root vegetables such as celery root, beets, parsnips and rutabaga.



Shepherd's Pie

At **Wilde Rover Irish Pub & Restaurant** in Kirkland, Wash., Shepherd’s Pie (shown) is chock-full of stewed beef, onions and root vegetables in dark-beer gravy, all topped with Irish-style mashed potatoes made with milk, butter, green onions and Irish cheese.



Executive Chef Evan Funke’s Root Vegetable Shepherd’s Pie at **Rustic Canyon Wine Bar & Seasonal Kitchen** in Santa Monica, Calif., delivers seasonal produce such as heirloom carrots, leeks, apples, turnips, parsnips and kohlrabi. The filling is blanketed with a roasted butternut squash purée that is sprinkled with breadcrumbs.