



TREND WATCH

Serve your guests the foods that mean something special.

The foods that not only taste wonderful, but also stir up wonderful memories. The foods we choose when we want something we can trust, with the tastes that never let us down. They're comfort foods. And everybody has their own definition of what exactly it means to them.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "comfort food" is, "Food prepared in a traditional style having a usually nostalgic or sentimental appeal." Others define comfort food in terms of igniting pleasure senses in your brain or food that you eat when you are experiencing feelings of social isolation.

At Smithfield Culinary, we have a much simpler definition with which everyone would agree. "Comfort Foods really taste good and make you feel good, too!" And in addition, we also have the products and insights to make your menu a favorite of comfort foods lovers.



A full

75%

of consumers agree that pork is a comfort food."

Technomic



Ask a Chef

We asked some of our favorite chefs for their personal meaning of comfort foods. Here's a sampling:

"Comfort foods are a personal expression of food for the soul."

"Comfort foods are home-cooked memories with friends & family."

"They bring out a connection to positive memories from the past."

"It's memories of when you were growing up, feel-good food."

"Comfort foods are people's craveable, familiar, go-to foods."

"American classics are what I think of when I hear comfort foods."

"There's something about roasting pork that people gravitate to. That's why pork is comfort food."

"Comfort foods are beautifully simple."



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TRADITIONAL Comfort Foods

From classic breakfasts, to relaxing breaks at lunch, to dinners with families and friends, to late-night sharing and snacking, there's the perfect comfort food to create memories in just about any situation. Comfort foods have always been a familiar go-to item on menus, and many traditional comfort foods are also made with pork, especially with bacon, sausage and ham.

The following shows the percentage of some popular classic comfort foods on U.S. menus, plus the percentage of those items paired with pork.¹

1. Datassential



Cheeseburger
53.6% of menus, 45% paired with bacon



Fried Chicken
44.1% of menus, 16% paired with bacon



Pizza
33.8% of menus, 65% paired with pepperoni, 61% paired with sausage, 49% paired with bacon, 35% paired with ham



Mac & Cheese
30.7% of menus, 5% paired with bacon, 9% paired with pork, 9% paired with BBQ



Grilled Cheese
25.8% of menus, 15% paired with bacon, 5% paired with ham



Lasagna
17.5% of menus, 12% paired with meatball, 10% paired with Italian sausage

INNOVATIVE Comfort Foods

Many operators are offering traditional comfort foods with an innovative spin. That's because more and more people are willing to try items with revamped flavors, high-trend ingredients and lower-calorie, better-for-you choices. From including bacon bits in a vanilla shake or adding pulled pork to a mac and cheese, there are endless combinations for tasty goodness.

Here are some simple suggestions to innovate comfort foods.

Pork Shoulder/Pork Butt: Prepare with mojo, Kalua, tamarind or dark beer/ale

Pork Ribs: Sauce with gojuchang, soy sauce or flavor with star anise or jerk

Pork Chops: Top with applesauce, Dijon mustard, chutney or coffee marinade

Ham: Top with pineapple, bourbon, raspberry or cherry

Pork Loin: Add tarragon, orange, bacon or honey

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ETHNIC FLAIR Comfort Foods

Almost every culture has something it falls back on for its comfort food. So, it's no surprise that ethnically flavored traditional American comfort foods are becoming increasingly popular, from familiar ethnic foods such as Korean BBQ and Japanese ramen to less familiar items such as Cantonese char siu or Mexican cochinita pibil.

Below are three ethnic dishes quickly growing in popularity on American menus.

Pernil from Latin America

One of the national dishes of Puerto Rico, pernil is a slowly roasted pork shoulder/leg that is marinated overnight in sofrito, salt, pepper and other spices, then slow roasted until the skin is crispy.

Bulgogi from East Asia

Thinly sliced beef or pork that is marinated in soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil, garlic, pepper and other ingredients that is grilled or can also be stir-fried in a pan, bulgogi is a popular dish in South Korea.

Nasi Goreng from Southeast Asia

The national dish of Indonesia, this version of fried rice features any type of meat (pork, chicken, beef, goat) spiced with soy sauce, shrimp paste, chiles and ginger and served with a side of prawn crackers.

What's on the Menu



Noodles & Company

BBQ Pork Mac is a blend of Wisconsin cheeses, slow-braised pork and crispy jalapeños, and topped with a bbq sauce. The dish is creamy, savory, and hearty goodness.



So Gong Dong Tofu & BBQ

Pork Belly with Kimchi, a spicy, fermented cabbage dish, is served with pork belly and a side of tofu. The combo of meaty, salty and spicy come together for this dish.

To discover what Smithfield can do to satisfy the global cravings of your customers of all ages, while building business for you, contact a Smithfield sales representative at 888-327-6526.

Everything you need to know about Smithfield products, recipes and more: Download our Smithfield Culinary App.

