

TRENDS

TO KNOW

FEBRUARY 2026

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Schreiber.

GET COZY WITH COMFORT FOOD

THE TREND

Comfort food is very personal, with each consumer's definition varying as to what gives them comfort. As a result, comfort food trends can shift as rapidly as demographics do. Some of the top comfort foods in terms of broadest appeal/most common on menus include potatoes, sandwiches, fries, soup, burgers, cake, ice cream, and bowls. When we look closer at the fastest-growing comfort food-related dishes on menus, though, many are globally-inspired with Singapore noodles (a dish that, despite its name, originated in Hong Kong and features vermicelli noodles and curry powder), tom kha (a Thai coconut soup) and pad Thai now among the top growing. Other notable top growers in the comfort food category include pistachio milkshakes (propelled by the Dubai chocolate trend) that are up 399% on menus (Datassential Menu Trends), Basque cheesecake (up 280%), and birria (up 345% and pictured here).

DAIRY REPORT

Cheese is integral to fan favorite, Ubiquitous comfort foods (pizza, burgers, sandwiches, soup, etc.), as well as Adoption-level comfort food megatrends like new bar foods, which notably showcase cheese as the filling for items like globally-inspired empanadas and arancini. Cheese also plays a prominent role in regional U.S. comfort foods, ranging from filling Chicago pizza puffs to topping Colorado chile verde. Many classic Mexican comfort foods (such as enchiladas) feature cheese and sour cream, too, and new wave Mexican classics are also leaning into cheese — think, for instance, of the cheese crust on the outside of the tortilla used in quesabirria, a dish that's up 982% on menus over the past 4 years (Datassential Menu Trends).

MENU INSPIRATION

RATATOUILLE ARANCINI

Atelier Florian | New Haven, CT
Risotto croquettes with Swiss cheese, mascarpone, and summer vegetables, topped with shaved parmesan.

QUESABIRRIA IRISH NACHOS

Agave and Rye | Covington, KY (HQ)
Slow-roasted birria beef, sweet and spicy bacon, queso, mozzarella cheese, crispy French fries, cowboy candy, and tobacco onions.

BERKSHIRE PORK CHOP SCHNITZEL

Josephine House | Austin, TX
Umeboshi mustard, kohlrabi slaw, and sour cream vinaigrette.

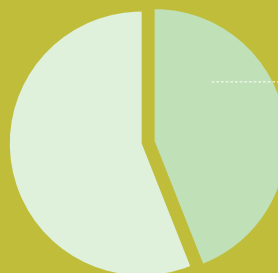
GREEN CHILE SMASH BURGER

Blanco Cocina and Cantina | Paradise Valley, AZ (HQ)
Roasted poblano, caramelized onion, queso blanco, chipotle mayo, and French fries.

LOWCOUNTRY SLOPPY JOE SANDWICH

The Southern General | Johns Island, SC
Spicy ground pork and beef, red Creole sauce, house-made pimento cheese, green tomato chow chow, and grilled local honey white bread.

DATA FILE



44%

OF CONSUMERS
MAKE THEMSELVES
COMFORT FOOD WHEN
THEY'RE FEELING DOWN
OR NEED A PICK-ME-UP

Datassential's Little Treat Culture HotShot Report

TREND STAGE

UBIQUITY



While comfort foods appear across the Menu Adoption Cycle (MAC), as a category, they're broadly in Ubiquity. The overall concept of comfort food is defined by familiarity and high appeal. However, the foods and flavors defining comfort continue to shift with demographics, and more and more, globally-inspired items are evolving into American comfort foods (think Asian pad Thai or Mexican quesabirria). Social media also plays a role in evolving comfort food trends, including the rise of Dubai chocolate and pistachio-flavored items like milkshakes.

Comfort food is constantly evolving but remains well-loved and a menu mainstay. Growing interest in global foods and flavors is leading to an evolution of comfort food to include global items, such as Mexican quesabirria that features a cheese crust on the outside of the tortilla. Social media is also playing a role in evolving comfort foods, with pistachio milkshakes taking off on menus in line with the rise of viral Dubai chocolate.

KEY TAKEAWAY