

Start with a Comfort Classic, End with a Signature Item



Learn how to put a twist on classic comfort foods and make a signature dish. It just takes a dash of creativity.

The beauty of classic, traditional favorites is how easy it is to innovate around them and create signature menu items.

Most customers already know comfort foods like pizza, macaroni and cheese, and fried chicken, so it doesn't take much of a sell to convince them to try something a little different.

- Make lasagna using pesto and ricotta or white béchamel instead of tomato sauce for an elegant version of this baked pasta; or tuck in some sliced fresh tomatoes to replicate the colors of the Italian flag
- Recast macaroni and cheese as a brunch specialty by baking it into a frittata with beaten eggs in an individual gratin dish or buffet-ready sheet pan
- Extend the appeal of chicken soup with a soup bar concept that allows patrons to customize with a choice of different ingredients and flavors:
 - Vietnamese (rice noodles, fresh herbs, lime wedges, fish sauce, and chiles)
 - Jewish-style chicken-in-the-pot (matzo balls or kreplach, chunks of poached chicken, cooked carrots)
 - Greek avgolemono (orzo pasta, beaten egg, lemon juice)

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- Peruvian (potatoes, shredded chicken, scallions, cilantro, chiles, and a halved hard-boiled egg)
 - Sell a take-and-bake or meal-kit version of your famous pizza with a selection of toppings for a takeout upgrade
 - "Signaturize" classic comfort-food components like sauces, gravies, dips, spreads, and aioli by adding a flavor element such as wine, an ethnic condiment (sriracha, anyone?), or a ready-to-use flavor concentrate
 - Experiment with global versions of fried chicken, such as chicken and waffles, Korean-style twice-fried chicken, spicy fried chicken sandwiches, or Japanese style karaage (alone for a small plate or topping a bowl of ramen)
 - Create a meatball menu with an appetizer, sub sandwich, spaghetti and meatball versions
 - Try a grownup version of grilled cheese: Gorgonzola and pear; bacon, tomato, and cheddar; pimento cheese patty melt; braised short rib with Taleggio and olive salad
 - Sliders serve as an appealing format for comforting meat dishes, such as pot roast, brisket, meat loaf, and roast turkey—and it's a great way to repurpose proteins from dinner
 - Make roast chicken special by serving it family style for Sunday supper, with accompaniments like scalloped potatoes, stuffing, Marsala gravy, salad or string beans amandine, and fresh rolls and flavored butter
 - Design an over-the-top ice cream sundae for two made with premium ice cream, decadent sauces, crumbled cookies, and drifts of whipped cream

Sources: Datassential SNAP! Fresh, September 2018; IFMA/Datassential CPP 2016, The Role of Fresh: Operator Insights

The information provided is based on a general industry overview, and is not specific to your business operation. Each business is unique and decisions related to your business should be made after consultation with appropriate experts.