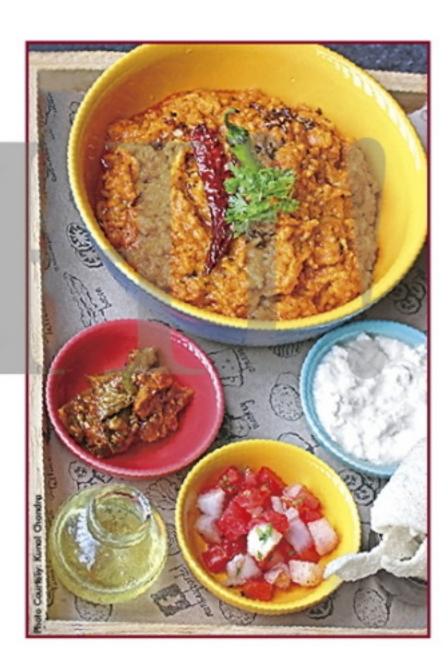
THE COMFORT COMEBACK



In a gastronomic world enamoured of molecular gastronomy and food trends, traditional home style cooking flew off the menus. But all that's changing. According to Fareeda Kanga a new breed of innovative chefs are adding a spin to classic favourites by using upscale ingredients and helping to notch comfort food out of the comfort zone.

Around the world, chefs who love the taste, aroma and flavours of full-bodied carb-rich food are reintroducing items on their menus that people really want to eat—and it's called 'Comfort Food'.

"While I think food trends like fusion and molecular gastronomy have their place in the evolution of cuisine, it is basic comfort food which most people remember. This of course means different things to different people," suggests Pune based food consultant and bestselling cookery book author, Karen Anand.

In the UK, this could be the roast potatoes around the Sunday joint or a particular cake or tart. In France, it could be runny Brie for dinner or a garlicky dressing on a salad or the smell of warm croissants as you walk by a bakery. In Italy, it's probably a bowl of risotto and a plate of crispy fritto misto.





"This is my great aunt's recipe for prawn Goan Prawn Curry curry. Most households in Goa have their Ingredients secret ingredient or touch. My aunt used to thicken the masala with sesame seeds instead of grated coconut and added the coconut milk separately. She used no oil. This gives a more refined flavour and makes for a lighter curry."—Karen Anand

500 gm raw prawns peeled and de-veined 4-5 pieces kokum 1/2 lt coconut milk thick

1 cup coconut milk thin (If you are using canned or ready-made coconut milk add 3:1 ratio coconut milk to water for the thin coconut milk) Grind to a fine paste with a little water the following: 10 dry Kashmiri chilies 1 tsp black pepper corns

1 tsp jeera 14 turmeric powder 10 medium cloves of garlie 1in piece of ginger 2 tsp til (sesame seeds)

Put the masala into a heavy bottomed pan with the thin coconut milk and slowly stir until the masala (spice paste) cooks on a low flame (about 5-7 min), the colour will change. Add the thick coconut milk a little at a time until it is all incorporated. Throw in the kokum and simmer. Add the prawns just before serving and heat through once. Add salt to taste. Never boil the curry as the oil from the coconut milk will separate and come to the surface. The same masala can be used for fish curry. Serve hot with steamed rice.

"If you have a mother that cooks, you would probably remember something she made. That memory is associated with love and family, not necessarily the taste of the dish. Out of that context it may be a very ordinary dish. So comfort food works as a memory trigger, something which satisfies you emotionally as well as physically," Anand explains.

Swish restaurants in the country are also

reviving this trend. "My food style leans towards comfort food," says executive chef Kelvin Cheung of Mumbai's Ellipsis restaurant. This native of Toronto is one of the chief protagonists for creating dishes that take you back to your childhood, that give you a warm nostalgic feeling.

At Ellipsis, Cheung's innovative menu

features comfort foods that are modified using newer techniques to create the same creamy velvety flavour in a lighter, cleaner format. For example he makes a traditional roux without flour by using sodium citrate that changes the PH level of cheese giving it a rich texture minus the heaviness of flour. His signature Chicken and Waffles also works with unusual ingredients and comprises of homemade sourdough buttermilk waffles with smoked honey truffle butter, bacon sriracha maple syrup gastrique and buttermilk-brined chicken. These dishes are heavy in umami and amino acids and give your mouth the feel of comfort food with less of the grease and heaviness," he explains.

Whilst Cheung may play on the

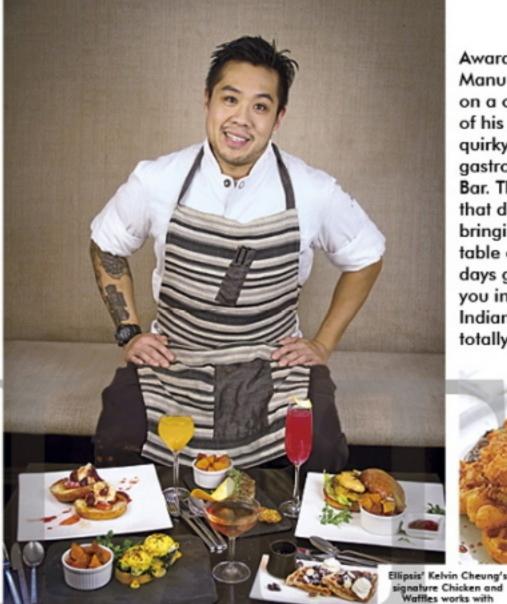


scientific side of ingredients, at The Sassy Spoon, executive chef, Irfan Pabaney relives his school days with a refreshing Kala Khatta cocktail that initially raised eyebrows when it was introduced at the swish eatery but is one of their best sellers today. "People love it because it's crammed with flavours that remind them of an era when life was uncomplicated and pleasures were simple. An ice gola or kala khatta was all it took to put a smile on a kids face back then," he avers.

Pabaney's special concoction hits all the right notes and differs from the roadside classic because it's loaded with fresh mulberries, oranges and pomegranate. For mains the old-fashioned mac-n-cheese gets a hit with Goa sausage as an accouterment.

"When you're depressed, you need to feed your mind, body and soul with all things good," says executive chef, Ashish Bhasin at Trident, Bandra Kurla, Mumbai. "Comfort food refers to any kind of food or beverage to which an individual might turn for momentary respite. This category of food is very subjective and is different for every individual. For some, it could be a childhood favourite dish and for others it could be a dish linked to a place or time that brings positive memories."

Bhasin believes there are some evergreen dishes on every menu that will always be the superstar performers. However, in order to take the diners experience to another level, it is important to present comfort food stylishly. At



Award-winning chef Manu Chandra takes us on a culinary journey of his favourites at the quirky, non-conformist gastro-pub, Monkey Bar. This is a menu that defies stereotypes, bringing boldly to the table comfort food from days gone by and lets you indulge in your Indian roots, with a totally fresh perspective.



Trident, Bandra Kurla, Mumbai, Bhasin jazzes up a poached egg, risotto, goat cheese by adding truffle flavored beetroot and goat cheese risotto with crumb fried poached egg. And khichdi is served in a

multigrain form with acheari raita. Down the road, at The Taj Lands End, Executive Chef Anirudhya Roy says, "For me, mutton curry has the power to take me back in time when every Sunday my mother used to prepare the curry which my siblings and I used to look forward to the entire week. We have brought the same experience to Masala Bay with the fundamental curry, cooked in the pressure cooker. With different cuts of lamb, the curry will be brought to the guests in the pressure cooker set on a wooden plate and the steam will be let off in front of the guests to transport them back in time."

The Sahib Room at Mumbai's Palladium Hotel is helmed by Chef Angad Rai who explains that the cuisine here is timeless, with a twist. The Gucchi ke Tikki, are not the aloo tikkis, which we're all so familiar with, but Chef Angad's version includes Himalayan Morel mushrooms. "The Lahori Chaampein are unique as they're marinated in a special fennel rub; traditional shorba becomes Satwar Pista Ka Shorbha with the addition of toasted pistachio and asparagus crème; even the Subzani Paneer Tikka is accompanied by a spiced prune chutney," he elaborates.

Award-winning chef Manu Chandra takes us on a culinary journey of his



Lemongrass Crème Brûlée

Ingredients 300 ml cooking cream 300 ml milk Amul Taza 200 gm sugar castor 1 Kaffir lime leaf 50 gm sugar demerera (brown)

Boil the milk and put in bruised lemon Bake at 150 degrees for 50 mins on a grass and torn lemon leaf, let it infuse. Separately heat cream with vanilla pod. Mix both milk and cream. Meanwhile whisk egg yolks with castor sugar, add the milk and cream mixture to eggs and give it a good whisk. Strain the

mixture and pour in the serving dishes.

Let it refrigerate. For serving dredge brown sugar caramelize with a blow torch and serve.



favourites at the quirky, non-conformist gastro-pub, Monkey Bar. This is a menu that defies stereotypes, bringing boldly to the table comfort food from days gone by and lets you indulge in your Indian roots,

pita bread. "These dishes really hit the spot, beat the blues and have a feel good

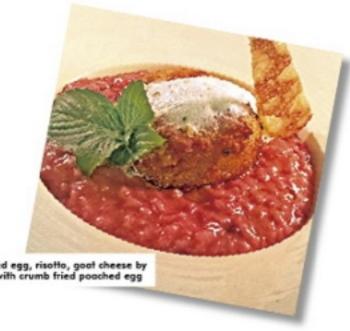
factor," he suggests.

khichdi and pulled pork curry with sandwich, with great skill—the Mobar Chocolate Cake.

Sundae Sandwich, while others pick up two different elements for delightful results-like the Rasmalai Pannacotta The desserts carry forward the same or the Khova Brioche Pudding (a quirky tone, enticing you with a mishmash sinful mix of almond cream, berries with a totally fresh perspective. Chandra of flavours that melt in your mouth. and ice cream), and if you are still suggests we sample the butter chicken Asundae is converted into a multi-layered in doubt, just opt for the Old Monk







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