

MAY/JUNE 2020

# FLAVOR & THE MENU

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BEST OF FLAVOR  
2020  
SPECIAL  
EDITION  
BEST OF FLAVOR

BEST OF FLAVOR 100 MENU IDEAS FROM OUR READERS

May/June 2020

FLAVOR TRENDS, STRATEGIES & SOLUTIONS FOR MENU DEVELOPMENT



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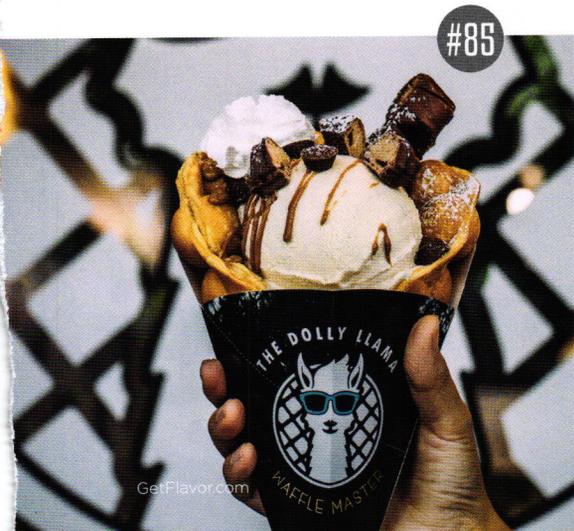


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# BEST of FLAVOR 2020

Our annual “Best of Flavor” edition is here to inspire, and especially so, given the current foodservice landscape. Every year, we invite our readers to submit entries of their best flavor builds for this special issue. The result is a compilation of inventive flavor experiences—all showcasing the passion in this industry. Here, you’ll find themes of flavor development that can serve as inspiration for the menu adaptations these times might necessitate. We know comfort is king right now. Consumers will look to restaurants for creative, delicious takes within this realm, so menu developers need to be at the ready with innovative offerings. This issue is a playbook for the times, with many of the entries serving up inspired takes on comfort builds.

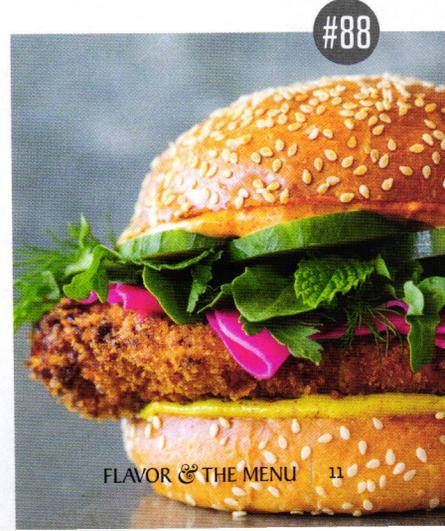
Creative comfort can be found in the numerous iterations of fried chicken, a clever twist on cacio e pepe and amped-up mac and cheese variations. Bacon is big throughout the issue, from a bacon banh mi to a bucket o’ bacon. Bowl builds abound, showcasing comfort while balancing mindfulness. Flavorful crusts and textures, like a ramen seasoning packet on fried chicken or a garlic streusel on baked and fried russets, add comfort while boosting differentiation. The ingenuity behind these entries proves that the passion for flavor is alive and well, and comfort-based menu innovation is on deck. ☺



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# CHEESE, PLEASE

PASSERELLE BISTRO | GREENVILLE, S.C.

Guests expect to see wonderful cheeses on a French menu, and at French eatery Passerelle Bistro, Executive Chef Jenifer Rogers gives them a unique experience with a signature Baked Goat Cheese starter. The dish combines fresh, creamy goat cheese and housemade blueberry-lavender jam inside a flaky phyllo shell. "The goat cheese is a wonderful combination of sweet and tangy, complemented by the floral lavender and sweet blueberry jam," she says.

Candied walnuts and citrus gel accompany the pastry, adding dimension and contrast. Crispy, savory, creamy and sweet, the Baked Goat Cheese is a customer favorite. The restaurant removed the dish at one point, but guests kept requesting it, and the appetizer was swiftly brought back, cementing its signature status. While it works well as a starter, the Baked Goat Cheese's rich, sweet and creamy profile easily moves into the dessert category. "Many of our guests start with one and save the second for dessert," says Rogers.



Jenifer Rogers

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## BAKED GOAT CHEESE

Goat cheese and blueberry-lavender jam in a phyllo shell, served with candied walnuts and citrus gel



# SPANISH MOVES

CORRIDA | BOULDER, COLO.

Eastern Med flavors have been making big moves into the brunch space, but keep your eye on Spanish cuisine. Its relaxed vibe and lively flavors fit right onto weekend menus. Corrida, a Spanish-inspired steakhouse, offers Gambas y Arroz on the brunch menu, giving guests something unexpected, but staying firmly in the realm of comfort.

Amos Watts, Executive Chef/Partner, says that it's a best-selling item because of that comfort-food positioning, along with its delicious flavor play. Gambas y Arroz showcases Gulf shrimp cooked in oil that's been flavored with garlic, bay leaves and shrimp shells. The dish also features oven-roasted tomatoes, white wine, bomba rice, butter, white verjus, lemon, garlic and shallots. Piquillo peppers and saffron introduce both flavor and color. To plate, the shrimp and tomato pan sauce go over the rice, then poached eggs crown the dish.



Amos Watts

JENA SCHLOSSER

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## GAMBAS Y ARROZ

Gulf shrimp and saffron bomba rice with peppers, tomatoes and poached eggs



# MUSHROOMING OPPORTUNITY

SHOUK | WASHINGTON, D.C.

When naming significant trends today, three come to mind easily: plant-forward menu development, Eastern Mediterranean flavors and the bowls platform. If ideation that stems from this trio fires on all cylinders, a top menu performer is likely to emerge. Shouk, an Israeli-inspired, plant-based fast casual, offers up a perfect case study with its Mushroom Shawarma Bowl.

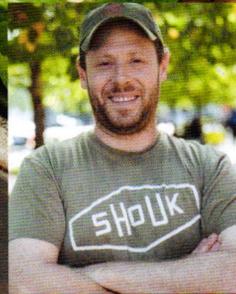
Chef/Co-Founder Dennis Friedman describes it as “the ultimate shawarma experience.” He uses oyster mushrooms, choosing them for their taste, texture and moisture content. Peeled in house to achieve varied, ragged textures, they’re coated with olive oil, seasoned with a shawarma spice mix and hard seared. “The result is a juicy bite and a perfect crispness on the edges, as if they just came off the roasting spit,” he says. The mushrooms are served over a rice-and-lentils blend, mixed greens or hummus. Other toppings include arugula, tahini, pickled cabbage, and cucumbers and onions in a seasoned rice wine vinegar. “This dish is a success because it invokes the shawarma experience, making the mushroom the star of the show, without trying to be something it is not,” says Friedman.



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## MUSHROOM SHAWARMA BOWL

with pickled cabbage, cucumber and onion salad, arugula and tahini over rice and lentils



Dennis Friedman

# CREAMY INDULGENCE

NOSE DIVE | GREENVILLE, S.C.

Executive Chef Eddie Wiles goes all in on indulgence and creaminess with his take on mac and cheese. Guests at Nose Dive, a restaurant that touts urban-style comfort food, appreciate the effort, making the Creamy Mac & Cheese one of the more popular items on the menu.

The build starts with a cheese sauce made with Gruyère and two cheddars: yellow and aged, sharp white. At pickup, cavatappi pasta is tossed in the sauce, with a handful of fontina folded in at the end. Once plated, the dish is garnished with shredded ricotta salata. “At first bite, it is just pure creaminess, then you get sharpness from the aged cheddar and Gruyère,” says Wiles.

He gets creative with add-ons, offering options like barbecue pulled pork, popcorn chicken, roasted broccoli, bacon, roasted tomatoes and Goldfish cracker crumbs. The recipe is easy to adapt for diners seeking gluten-free alternatives. Since the cheese sauce does not have a traditional roux, gluten-free pasta is the only swap needed, says Wiles.



Eddie Wiles

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## CREAMY MAC & CHEESE

Cavatappi, cheddar, fontina, Gruyère and ricotta salata

