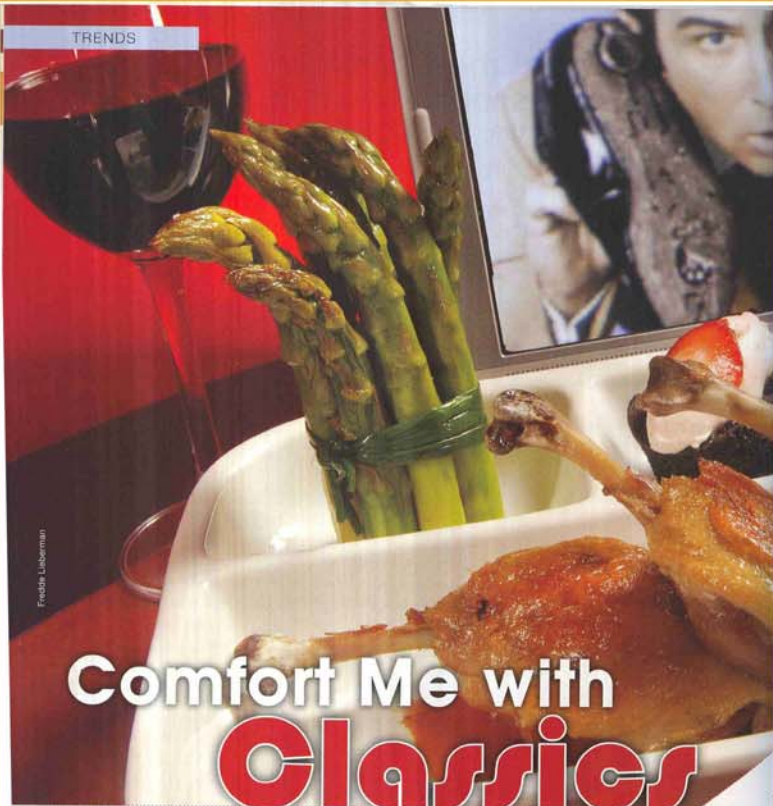


TRENDS



Comfort Me with Classics

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Chefs are interpreting and refining comfort-food classics—often with whimsy and playfulness, but always with reverence.
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By Melanie Wolkoff Wachsman

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Premium ingredients

Refocusing dishes with high-quality ingredients provides a simple enhancement. Stephanie Sokolove, chef/owner, Stephanie's on Newbury, Boston, serves "sophisticated comfort food," which she describes as the next generation of comfort food. Think bigger flavors, fresher ingredients and an elegant presentation.

"We use sophisticated ingredients that weren't available 30 years ago when you didn't know you could put garlic in mashed potatoes or truffles in macaroni and cheese," she says.

She views the past as a springboard for inspiration and prepares all recipes from scratch. An open-faced Thanksgiving sandwich plates roasted turkey, squash mayonnaise, mashed potatoes, cornbread stuffing, cranberry sauce and gravy on toasted sourdough bread. Her shepherd's pie is delivered in a roasted half a squash with layers of corn, ground beef, butternut squash and mashed potatoes. She surprises guests with cheddar cheese between two layers of beef in her meatloaf.

"Even though they're old recipes, they feel new," Sokolove says.