Take comfort in nostalgic favorites

Delicious and soothing, comfort foods bring back memories of the cozy childhood meals mom made. And for the past few years, cooks have delighted in finding their way home to these friendly, nostalgic favorites.

WHY ALL this yearning for basic, home-style cooking? Some trend-watchers see it as an antidote to our fast-paced, frenzied lifestyles. Others point to the economy, the mini baby boom with its stay-at-home tendencies, or even the weather.

Whatever the reason, the outcome is the same: comfort foods speak to the soul to reassure and soothe us at any age.

Today, heirloom recipes are being retrieved from recipe files and old cookbooks and updated so they are less time consuming to prepare and lower in fat.

FEW FOODS are as soothingly rich as macaroni and cheese. 1990s Mac 'n Cheese, developed in the Quaker Kitchens, still has the requisite creamy cheese sauce but contains less fat and more fiber than the classic.

Fat busters include substituting reduced fat cheddar cheese and skim milk, and decreasing the amount of cheese and margarine. Wheat germ stirred into the sauce and sprinkled on top before baking boosts the amount of fiber.

Wheat germ also is naturally low in saturated fat, sodium-free and a source of eight essential vitamins and minerals.

Easy-to-make, this dish needs little more than a salad or vegetable and fruit dessert. Leftovers reheat well in the microwave oven.

Like macaroni and cheese, bread pudding has comforted young and old for generations. Pear, Raisin & Walnut Bread Pudding is more convenient because it's prepared in one dish.

A few ingredient changes make it more healthful. Skim milk and egg whites cut the fat and cholesterol; a combination of fresh and dried fruit, whole wheat bread and wheat germ add fiber.

Because wheat germ has a texture similar to that of finely ground nuts, just a sprinkling of chopped walnuts is needed for flavor.

Serve the pudding warm with a generous spoonful of the creamy cinnamon-flavored sauce that's made with low-fat yogurt. You won't even miss the more traditional whipped cream.

1990S MAC 'N CHEESE

2 tablespoons margarine
¼ cup finely chopped onion
¼ cup flour
2 cups skim milk
1 cup low-fat cheddar cheese
2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
¼ teaspoon hot pepper sauce
½ cup wheat germ, any flavor
2 cups cooked macaroni
3 tablespoons wheat germ, any flavor

Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Melt margarine in medium saucepan. Stir in onion; cook over medium heat until tender. Add flour; heat until mixture is smooth and bubbly, stirring constantly. Gradually add milk and heat until boiling, stirring constantly. Stir in cheeses, hot pepper sauce and ½ cup wheat germ; mix well. Stir in cooked macaroni. Spoon into 1-quart casserole. Top with remaining wheat germ. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until heated through. 4 Servings.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 410 Calories, 24 g Protein, 42g Carbohydrate, 16g Total Fat, 25mg Cholesterol, 4g Dietary Fiber, 400mg Sodium. Percent of calories from fat: 33 percent.

PEAR, RAISIN & WALNUT BREAD PUDDING

1½ cups toasted whole wheat bread cubes (2-3 slices coarse textured bread)
¼ cup wheat germ, any flavor
1½ cups diced fresh pears
3 tablespoons raisins
2 tablespoons finely chopped walnuts
1¼ cups skim milk
⅓ cup firmly packed brown sugar
3 egg whites, slightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
⅓ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly spray 1½-quart casserole with nonstick cooking spray. Combine bread cubes, wheat germ, pears, raisins and walnuts in casserole. Combine milk, brown sugar, egg whites, vanilla and 1 teaspoon cinnamon; mix well. Pour milk mixture evenly over bread mixture.

Bake on center oven rack 40 to 45 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Combine yogurt and ½ teaspoon cinnamon. Serve yogurt sauce with warm bread pudding. 5 S

1990s Mac 'n Cheese is warm and comfo less fat and more fiber than the macaron made. Delicious, nutrition-smart and easy bines the best of the present and past.

Nutrition
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Taking the mystery out of words on a food lab

Lois Thieleke
home economist, Cooperative Extension Service

Acidulant, humectant, methyl silicone, sequestrants or xanthan gum listed on a food label certainly do not sound appetizing. There are about 3,000 different additives, ranging from sugar and salt to preservatives. Interestingly, the additives consumed by Americans in largest amounts are sugar and other sweeteners and salt!

The thousands of food additives serve more than 40 different functions. The main reasons for having additives are appeal, nutritional value, processing and freshness. Coloring agents, natural and synthetic flavors, flavor enhancers and sweeteners stimulate the senses for appeal.

Foods such as bread and milk have been fortified with vitamins and minerals lacking in the diet or enriched to replace vitamins and minerals lost in processing. Stabilizers, thickeners and emulsifiers give body and texture to foods. They blend liquids evenly, help retain moisture and prevent lumping. Preservatives also retard spoilage, help retain color and freshness and keep oils and fats from turning rancid.

Acidulants or acidifiers enhance flavor or adjust the natural acidity of foods. They inhibit growth of microorganisms and prevent discoloration and rancidity. Humectants help retain moisture, freshness and texture. These are glycerol, propylene glycol and sorbitol and are common in candies, shredded coconut and marshmellows.

Methyl silicone prevents oil from foaming while sequestrants are chemicals that bind trace amounts of iron and copper that might cause discoloration or rancidity. Xanthan gum stimulates the texture of sugar or oil in low-calorie products and can replace starch in pudding and pie fillings.

Here are more key terms you'll encounter on a food label. Get your chemistry book out — it is all complicated.

Agar — is a tasteless vegetable gum that stabilizes or thickens food, including some pastries.

Alginatic — are made from seaweed that thickens many salad dressings.

BHA/BHT — Keep oils from turning rancid and currently under review by the Food and Drug Administration.

Calcium Propionate — occurs naturally in Swiss cheese. It is commonly used in cheese, bread and baked goods to keep the product fresh by retarding mold growth.

Carob Gum — can also be listed as locust bean gum. It is a thickener that improves texture and blends ingredients in products such as ice cream, salad dressing or sausage.

Carrageenan — is an extract from seaweed that stabilizes the size of ice crystals in ice cream. (It is also an ingredient in the McLean burgers.)

Cellulose Gum — enhances texture and helps maintain moisture. Derived from plants it converts liquids to granular form or smooth spreading gels. Common in candy, pastry fillings and jellies.

Guar Gum — is a thickening and stabilizing agent made from a plant that resembles a soybean plant. It adds texture and fullness to a product such as gravies, sauces and pet food.

Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein — is a product prepared from soybeans, wheat or corn that helps bring out the natural flavors of food.

Lecithin — is found in plant and animal tissue, particularly eggs and soybeans and helps to keep foods well-blended. For example it keeps mayonnaise from separating and prevents food from becoming rancid or losing flavor.

Modified Food Starch — are thickeners made from grains, potatoes or tapioca. Helps prevent lumps from forming in powdered foods.

Potassium Sorbate — helps prevent microbes from spoiling foods such as cheese, wine, margarine and fruit juice drinks.

Sodium Benzoate — prevents microorganisms from spoiling processed foods.

Sodium Erythorbate — is used in cured meat products to maintain flavor, aroma and color.

These are just a few of the scary and mysterious words on food labels. However, don't panic! If a food label was put on a fresh succulent cantaloupe it would read like this: "Water, starches, cellulose, pectin, fructose, sucrose, glucose, malic acid, citric acid, succinic acid, anesyl propionate, amyl acetate, ascorbicacid (vitamin C), ri
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● SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE

Registrations being accepted for Schoolcraft College's fourth annual Chef's Seminar for Sophisticated Cooks, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 9. Star-quality chefs will be present to share their culinary talents. Eight workshops are offered in the day-long seminar, with registrants selecting workshops of their choice. The $150 fee includes seminars, and a luncheon. For information call, 462-4448. Schoolcraft College is at 18600 Haggerty Road between Six and Seven Mile Roads in Livonia.

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ROOM - male, non smoker/drink, quiet, privileges/kitchen, driveway parking. $275 mo. + security & utilities. Leave message 532-1787

TROY - furnished bedroom & bath, kitchen & laundry privileges for 30 professional. $350/Mo. 689-7469

WESTLAND - non smoking male roommate wanted. All appliances, clean. $215 month. Available early March. 729-8316

BLOOMFIELD - large roommate with. Non-smoker, clean & responsible person. $250 mo. + ½ utilities. Available March 6. 663-4083

21 Living Quarters To Share

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BLOOMFIELD HILLS - Female non-smoker for 3rd roommate in 3 bedroom condo. $275/mo. plus 1/3 utilities. Available March 1. 646-1859

CANTON - young adult has 2 bedroom apartment to share with working person. $290 plus ½ utilities. 416-0192

FARMINGTON HILLS - very large unfurnished bedroom, walk-in closet. Non-smoking female only. $390 mo. utilities included. Eves. 661-5511

FEMALE NON SMOKER wanted to share 2 bedroom, 1½ bath apt. Westland, includes pool, dishwasher, cable. $230/mo. + ½ utilities. Call Catherine after 6pm. 326-3597

FEMALE - PROFESSIONAL, non-smoke to share nice 3 bedroom townhouse in Troy. Partly furnished. 879-3274 or 951-1524

FEMALE ROOMATE needed to share 3 bedroom home in Canton. $325 per month includes everything but phone. Danielle 397-2554

FEMALE ROOMMATE wanted, professional non smoker to share 3 bedroom apts. 11 Mile & Greenfield area. 559-6063 558-8326

FEMALE ROOMMATE needed immediately, to share 2 bedroom apt. in Garden City. $250/MO. includes utilities. Non smoker, non drinker. Call Nancy 261-2469

FEMALE seeks same to share 2 bedroom apartment with washer & dryer, near Oakland University. $250 mo. plus utilities. 377-0315

FEMALE to share 6 bedroom, 4½ bath house in exclusive Royal Oak area. $375 month includes utilities. No pets. Call 9am-6pm 398-1859

FEMALE TO SHARE nice home in Cherry Hill/Newburgh Area. Non smoker, single parents welcome. $250/mo. 274-7334 875-9494

FORD ROAD MERIKMAN
Nice apt. $225/mo. includes utilities. Female preferred. Page Tom at 599-4856 or call 421-7345

LIVE ON a lake 2 housemates needed for 3 bedroom duplex on East Lake, close to Novi, Downtown Kings Harbor, male or female. $265 mo. plus utilities. Peter 440 8441 683-0661

LIVONIA - Basement apt. head separate non-smoking person to monitor computer in exchange for living quarters. Ideal for student. Huge house. Call early 525-2767

LIVONIA - Female share no smoke home, room with phone & TV. $175 includes utilities, kitchen, laundry, cable. Leave message 422-8176

LIVONIA - Share 3 bedroom home with male professional. Kitchen, laundry privileges, ½ garage available. No smokers or pets. $300 mo. includes utilities. 421-7157

LIVONIA - Very nice clean home. Laundry & cleaning done for you. Some meals prepared, full privileges. $300/mo. 427-5

LOOKING FOR mature, drug free female to share 3 bedroom home with lovely lake private. 3 night's per week babysitting in exchange for rent, housekeeping in exchange for utilities. 443-2

MALE or female to share 3 bedroom home in Oak Park with kitchen privileges. $260 a month plus utilities. 542-0452

MATURE WOMAN seeks responsible adult to share her Westland home. $210.00 a month plus ½ of the utilities. Call 681-6207

PROFESSIONAL male to share 3 bedroom colonial. Fireplace, air conditioned, deck. Pets welcome. $245 mo. + ½ utilities. Canton 397-5149

ROMULUS
Nice area, home to share with non smoker. $260 per month includes utilities. 955-9140

ROOMMATE WANTED. W. Bloomfield, Square Lake & Middlebelt area. References required. Must be employed. 30 days $300 plus ½ utilities. Call Debby at 681-0309

ROYAL OAK - $315/MO
2 story Townhouse, Basement, 2 bath. Month to month rent. 435-7383

SEEKING mature professional or graduate student - very nice home in Southfield, 40 seconds from 13 Mile & Evergreen. 4 bedrooms, 2½ baths, carpeting, fireplace, air, grand piano. 15 to Springer Market. Atmosphere is peaceful & conducive to studying. This is a smoke & drug free house. rent $275 plus 1/3 utilities plus $275 security. 355-4579

SHARE SPACIOUS 2 bedroom apt. w/fireplace in Westland. Clubhouse, indoor-outdoor pool, jacuzzi, saunas. $270/mo. + ½ utilities. 495-6543

SOUTHFIELD - Female, mid 20's, looking to share 3 bedroom townhouse, non-smoker. $290/month includes heat & water. 827-0969

SOUTHFIELD - Share 4 bedroom home/quality area. Private room/phone/kitchen/laundry. No smoking/pets. $245-$265. 746-9237

WAYNE STATE student seeks roommate for lower Manitou Apt. Fully furnished. $175/mo. includes utilities. 365-2603

WEST BLOOMFIELD
Male wanted to share furnished 2 bedroom, 2 bath condo. $380/mo. including utilities, cable. 788-0553

WESTLAND HOUSEMATE to share large 4 bedroom home, Middlebelt/Ann Arbor Trail area. Private bath. $350 + security, ½ utilities. No dogs. References wanted. 427-2542

422 Wanted To Rent

FORMER Birmingham couple needs furnished apt or home for 1 or 2 mos. beginning Sept. Birmingham/Troy area. 27833 Encinoza, Mission Viejo, CA 92692 or 714-770-8458

PROFESSIONAL female, 40's, smoker, wishing to share 2 bedroom apartment or house with private bath with same as soon as possible. $250/mo maximum. 427-4519

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