



# The Finest Comfort

# FOOD

By Karen Catchpole

"I define luxury comfort food as taking the foods we all know and love and redefining them with higher quality ingredients," says David Santos, chef/partner of Louro Restaurant in Manhattan and an alum of Bouley and Per Se. "It's the art of taking something that is simple, common and comforting and elevating it to new heights."

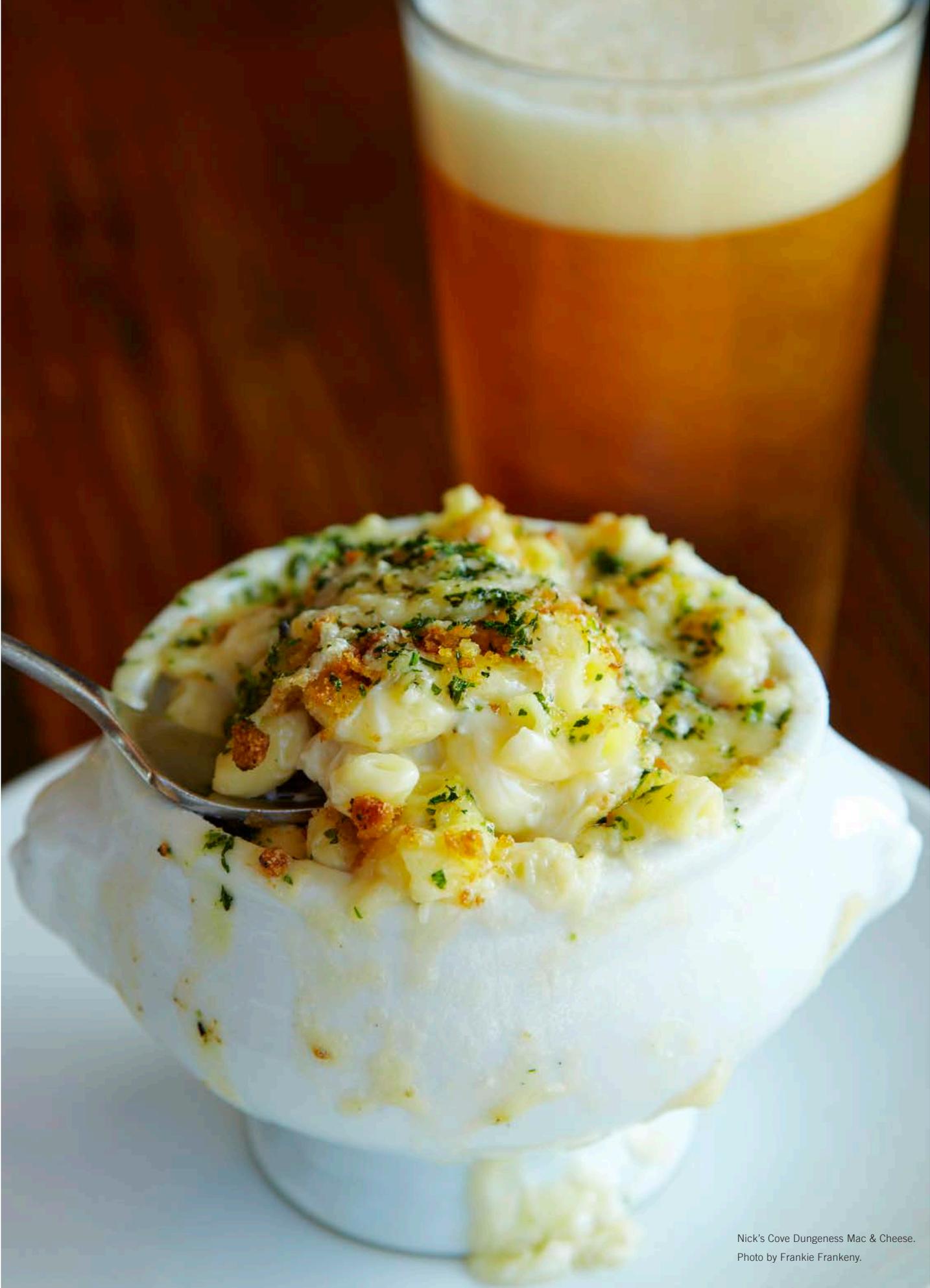
Santos says the luxury comfort food trend started when chefs "put a dress on mac 'n cheese" by adding ingredients like truffles or lobster.

"Thomas Keller called one of his foie gras dishes 'Liver & Onions' years ago," adds Kevin Hickey, executive chef and

partner of Bottlefork Bar & Kitchen and Partner/Director of Food & Beverage at Rockit Ranch Productions. "It started a trend."

The luxury comfort food trend has evolved since dressed up mac 'n cheese and Chef Keller's Liver & Onions. "My luxury comfort food style is about refinement and a little less show," says Santos. "Not just putting gold leaf on something. I believe that what's in front of you should taste amazing first."

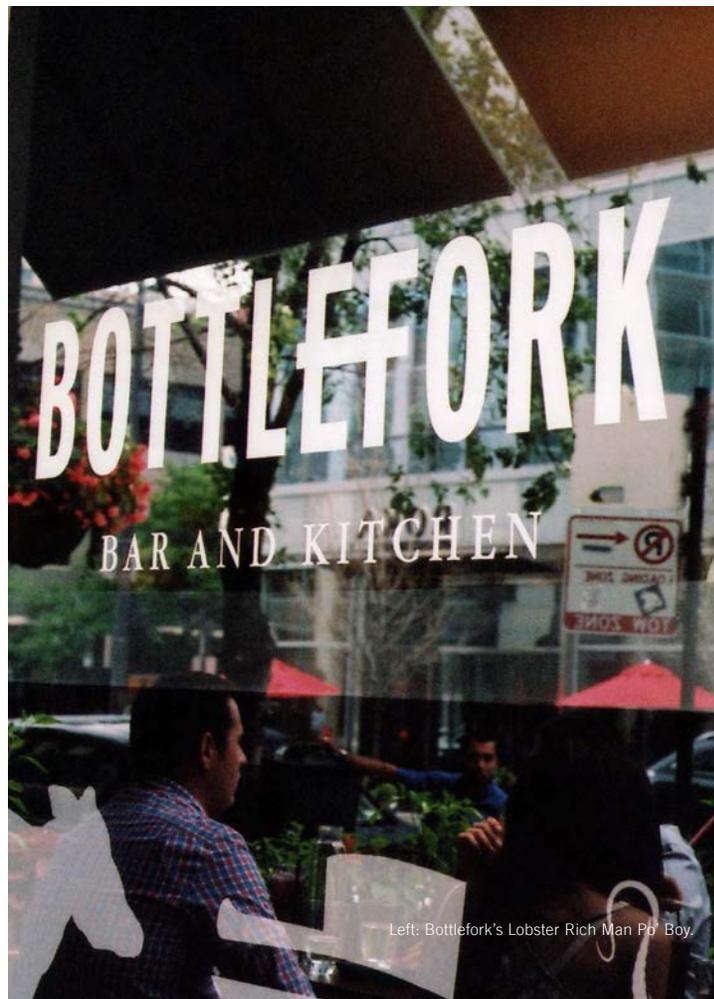
And so do many other chefs from coast to coast. Here are fall's tastiest, most comforting indulgences.



Nick's Cove Dungeness Mac & Cheese.  
Photo by Frankie Frankeny.



Louro's Scrambled Emu Egg, Photo by Gabi Porter.



Left: Bottlefork's Lobster Rich Man Pt' Boy.



## FAVORITE SEASONAL SPECIALTIES

Fall events and seasonal ingredients, marked by the country's best comfort food creations.

Just in time for football season, Brennan's of Houston is offering Blue Crab & Caviar Nachos. Served at the bar, these over-the-top nachos are made with a pound of Louisiana jumbo lump crab, fire roasted corn, St. Andre cheese, avocado, mirtilon pico de gallo and lime cream. But their crowning glory is a full ounce of Petrossian caviar.

"The Truffled Pot Pie started as a dish for our vegetarian menu in the fall," explains Chef Santos of NYC's Louro. Made with fall root vegetables in truffle cream with shaved truffles all within a perfect puff pastry, you won't even miss the meat.

Northern Californian Dungeness crab is at its best in the fall. At Nick's Cove Restaurant and Oyster Bar near San Francisco, executive Chef Austin Perkins uses the seasonal delicacy in his Dungeness crab mac 'n cheese, but he doesn't stop there. Known for its kitchen garden farm and sourcing ingredients as close to the restaurant as possible, Chef Perkins finishes his decadent dish with local artisan cheeses made within a few miles of Nick's Cove including Spring Hill Cheddar from Petaluma and Point Reyes Farmstead Toma.

"Think about how many eggs you've eaten in your life," challenges Chef David Santos of Louro in New York City. None, however, are quite like the Scrambled Emu Egg with wild mushrooms and shaved truffles offered at Louro. The exotic egg is the equivalent of 12 chicken eggs and meant to be shared among four to eight people.

## FAVORITE SANDWICHES

Cheeky names and inventive twists make three classic sandwiches new again.

Washington DC's Ripple, known for casual fine dining and its award-winning wine program, also offers a gourmet grilled cheese bar. "It's fun while still being high-end, just like the restaurant," explains Executive Chef Marjorie Meek-Bradley. Her favorite offering is the Rich e Rich made with sliced prosciutto, morbier and truffle butter.

According to Chef Kevin Hickey, the name of the Rich Man Po' Boy served at his Bottlefork Bar & Kitchen in Chicago, was inspired by a 70's TV show called "Rich Man, Poor Man". "The dish itself was inspired by the desire to create a lobster roll that was more exciting than what everyone else was serving." This one is amped up with Maine lobster, foie gras and fried oysters nestled in a toasted brioche bun.

"The allusion of something homey and pedestrian made with luxury ingredients seemed right," says Matt Christianson, Executive Chef at Urban Farmer in Portland, of the inspiration for his elegantly deconstructed Shaved Foie Gras Torchon. This luxury PB&J is made with quenelles of foie gras peanut butter, Muscat grape jelly, peeled red grapes, foie gras sponge cake with grilled bread batons, shavings of foie gras torchon, and finished with micro sorrel. "I was able to reminisce and innovate at the same time."



Urban Farmer's Luury PB&J



Del Frisco's Grille Cheesesteak Eggrolls



Ripple's Rich e Rich Grilled Cheese.  
Photo by Sarah Matista.



## FAVORITE INGREDIENT COMEBACK

Venture inside the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner Hotel in McLean, Virginia and take a seat at Harth restaurant where you'll find butterscotch pudding served fondue style along with salted caramel and scotch-soaked pound cake for dipping.

At the Signature Room on top of the John Hancock building in Chicago, lounge manager Patrick Gibellina has created an adult way to beat the fall chill and indulge in a childhood favorite with a twist. His Oatmeal Cookie Martini features Bailey's Irish Cream, Fireball Whiskey and butter-scotch liquor served with a cinnamon stick garnish.

## FAVORITE 2-IN-1 COMBOS

Why choose just one luxury comfort food when these inventive combos double the delicious?

Cheesesteak Eggrolls made by rolling classic cheesesteak ingredients into eggroll dough then deep frying are served with sweet chili and mustard dipping sauce at Del Frisco's Grille in Chicago.

The personal-size 4505 Bacon Hot Dog Pizza is a staple on the special Fourth of July menu at A16 Rockridge in Oakland. The smoky, bacon hotdogs are sourced from acclaimed 4505 Meats in San Francisco, an artisanal purveyor helmed by master butcher Chef Ryan Farr. Chef Rocky Maselli, who trained in Naples where he became a certified Associazione Vera Pizza Napoletana (VPN) pizzaiolo, stretches out A16 pizza dough, piles on grana padano cheese, fresh mozzarella, fresh corn cut off the cob, basil leaves, and the sliced hot dogs before baking it for 90 seconds in a Stefano Ferrara hand-made, wood-burning pizza oven that's also VPN certified.



The Signature Room's Oatmeal Cookie Martini.



A16 Rockridge's 4505 Bacon Hot Dog Pizza