

The New COMFORT FOOD

Life, etc.

These irresistible childhood faves get delicious grown-up tweaks, courtesy of red-hot Chicago chef Stephanie Izard. So right for the season, it's the perfect fare to warm up even the coldest night

PHOTOGRAPHED
BY MARCUS
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the new
TOMATO
SOUP &
GRILLED
CHEESE

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COMFORT FOOD is a perennial favorite, and if you ask Chicago chef Stephanie Izard, memories play a big part in its appeal. “These foods are incredibly nostalgic. Everyone likes to share how their mom made it or the best place they’ve eaten it,” says the *Top Chef* winner, the show’s first female champ. But this kitchen whiz can’t resist putting her own spin on things by using unexpected flavors—after all, the dish that cinched her *Top Chef* victory artfully combined mushrooms, pistachios, and blackberries. Yet when it comes to reimagining classics, “you don’t want to change things so much that people don’t recognize them,” says Izard, purveyor of the always-packed Girl & the Goat restaurant and the soon-to-open diner-style Little Goat. “Stay true to the basics, but add more flavorful ingredients. Guests will say, ‘Wow, it tastes even better than I remember!’” Sample these seven eye-opening updates on dishes we’ve been devouring for decades, and prepare to fall in love all over again.

—ERIN ZAMMETT RUDDY



THE LATEST BOOK FROM THE STAR CHEF

Tomato & Apple Soup

SERVES 6–8

Cider and apples subtly sweeten and rev up the tomato flavor. “The additions don’t make it harder to prepare,” says Izard. “But they do make it taste so much more intriguing.” Sambal, a blend of chilis, salt, and vinegar, gives it a kick.

- 2 tbsps butter
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 3 Honey Crisp (or Fuji) apples, peeled, cored, and sliced
- ½ cup tomato paste
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp sambal (Huy Fong sambal oelek chili paste, \$4/8 oz.; amazon.com or local Asian markets)
- ½ cup dry white wine

- 2 16 oz. cans whole peeled tomatoes (and juice)
- 4 cups apple cider
- ¾ cup heavy cream, divided in half
- Salt and pepper to taste

1 In a large soup pot, melt butter over medium heat. Add onions, garlic, and a pinch of salt. Sauté for 10 minutes until pale and tender. **2** Add apples, tomato paste, mustard, sambal, and white wine. Let wine reduce by half (5–7 minutes). **3** Add tomatoes and cider; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for an hour. **4** Pour half the soup in a blender. Purée with one part of the cream until smooth. Repeat with the second batch and combine it all together. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Twice as Good Grilled Cheese

SERVES 6

The key is to use more than one cheese. Izard’s new sandwich-filling obsession: gjetost, a caramelized goat cheese with sweet sophistication. If you can’t find it, swap in any smoked Gouda. To ensure maximum meltiness, turn the heat down and take your time.

- 6 tbsps unsalted butter, divided into 12 equal-size parts
- 12 thickly cut slices peasant bread
- 2 cups grated sharp cheddar
- 2 cups grated gjetost (try Ski Queen gjetost, at Whole Foods and other supermarkets)

1 Heat a large, nonstick pan over medium-low heat. Melt one pat of butter. **2** Place one slice of bread in the pan; top generously with equal amounts of both cheeses. **3** When cheese begins to melt, top with second piece of bread. Melt another pat of butter in the pan and flip sandwich with a spatula, cooking until all the cheese has melted and bread is golden brown (about 4–6 minutes). **4** Remove, cut in half, and serve with soup.



The New Mac & Cheese

Four Cheese Macaroni with Bacon

SERVES 8–10 AS AN APPETIZER OR 4–6 AS AN ENTRÉE

This refined riff on the classic uses multiple cheeses and meats (serve it with a salad). Apples, a favorite Izard secret ingredient, make a repeat performance here (they’re also in the tomato soup). “When people say they don’t like fruit in their food, I just tell them to trust me. This is my job!”

- ¼ cup unsalted butter, plus 3 tbsps
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp red pepper flakes
- 1½ cups Panko-style bread crumbs (available in most grocery stores)
- 6 cups whole milk
- 1 small onion, halved
- 4 oz. bacon (3–4 slices), cut into ½-inch pieces
- 3 Fuji apples, peeled and diced
- 2 tbsps apple cider vinegar
- ¾ cup diced sopressata or other similarly spiced cured meat
- ¾ cup chopped deli-style cooked ham
- Salt
- 1 lb. dried shell pasta
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups grated whole-milk mozzarella cheese (reserve ½ cup for topping)
- 1 cup grated aged cheddar cheese
- 1 cup grated smoked Gouda cheese
- 1 cup grated Havarti cheese

FILLING

1 In a large saucepan melt 3 tbsps butter over medium heat. Add garlic and red pepper flakes. Cook until garlic is soft and fragrant (1–2 minutes). Add bread crumbs and quickly mix to combine. Remove mixture to a bowl. **2** In a medium saucepan combine milk and onion over medium heat. Bring milk to a low simmer. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. **3** As the milk simmers, return large saucepan

to the stove and warm over medium heat. Add bacon and cook until crispy (10–12 minutes). Remove bacon with a slotted spoon and set aside, keeping the leftover fat in the pan.

4 Add apples to the hot bacon fat in the pan, sautéing until softened (1–2 minutes). Remove apples and place in a bowl; add vinegar and toss to coat. **5** Add sopressata to hot pan and sauté until crisp (about 1–2 minutes). Remove and mix with chopped ham in the bowl with apples. **6** Mince the crisped bacon and place in bowl with bread-crumbs mixture; toss to combine. Preheat broiler to high. **7** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta, and cook according to package instructions.

SAUCE

1 As the pasta cooks, melt ¼ cup butter in saucepan over medium high heat. Sprinkle flour over butter and whisk together to form a paste. Let mixture cook until it begins to smell nutty (1–2 minutes). **2** Slowly strain simmered milk and onion (½ cup at a time) into the pan with butter and flour, whisking well to avoid lumps, and discard onion. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Let sauce thicken enough to coat the back of a spoon (about 5 minutes). **3** Add 1 cup mozzarella, cheddar, Gouda, and Havarti to the sauce, stirring as the cheese melts.

ASSEMBLY

1 When pasta is done, drain and add to cheese sauce along with apple mixture. Stir to combine all ingredients; pour into a lightly greased 13” x 9” baking dish. **2** Sprinkle breadcrumb mixture and reserved mozzarella evenly over the top of dish. Broil until bread crumbs are golden and cheese bubbles (about 4–5 minutes). **3** Serve immediately, or keep warm in a 200°F oven for up to 30 minutes.

Beef stew and macaroni and cheese recipes from *Girl in the Kitchen*, by Stephanie Izard with Heather Shouse, published by Chronicle Books, 2011.

Life, etc.

The New Shepherd's Pie

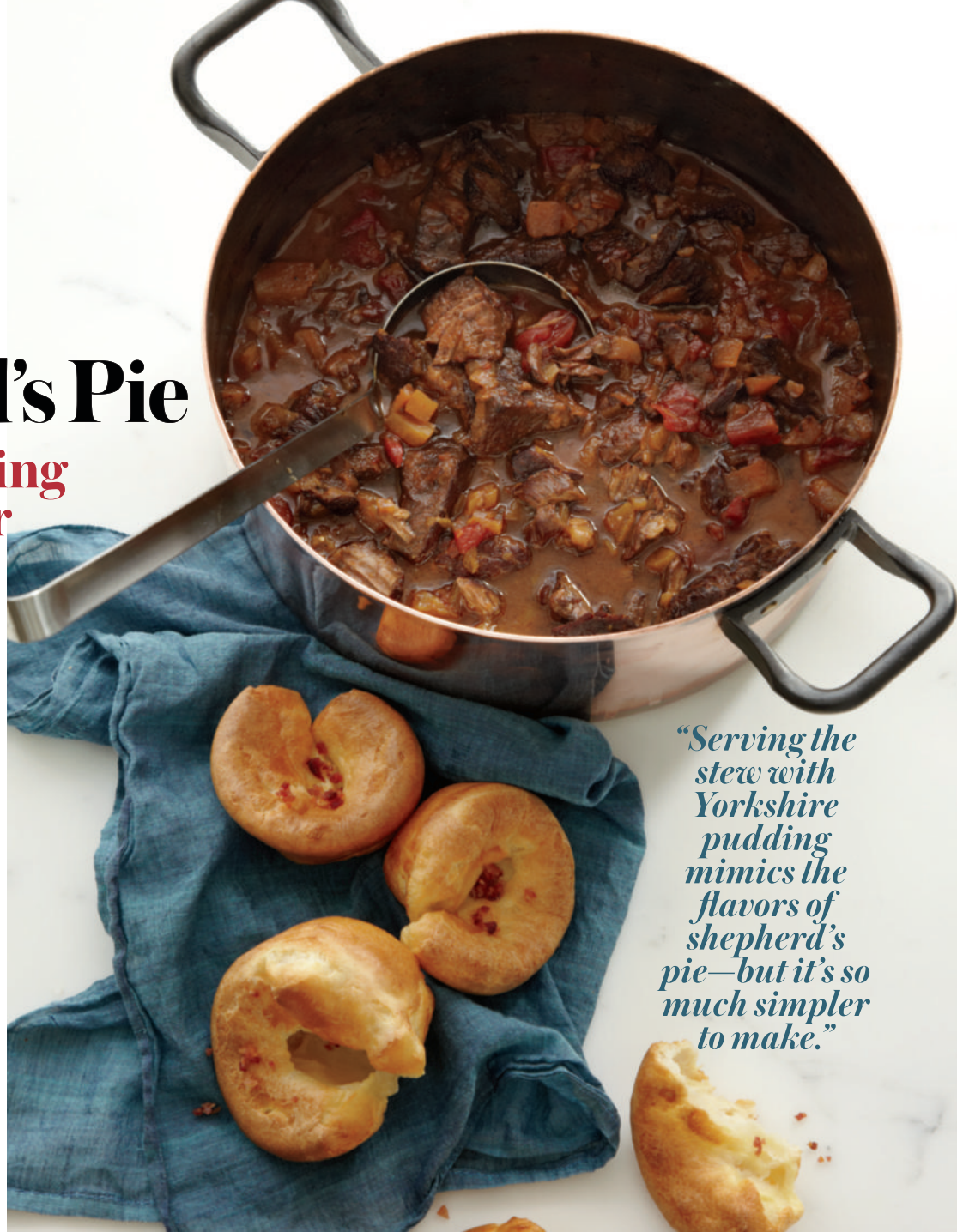
The Never-Ending Chicago Winter Beef Stew

SERVES 8

This insanely delicious one-pot meal infuses beef with layers of exciting flavors: salty fish sauce, tart vinegar, and sweet fruits (including pineapple, which also helps tenderize the meat). While prep time is just 30 minutes, the stew needs to simmer for 4 hours for ideal tenderness, so allow ample time in advance.

- 3 tbsp vegetable or canola oil
- 3 lb. beef, cubed (chuck or short rib)
- 2 medium onions, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pineapple, peeled, cored, and finely diced
- 1 apple, peeled, cored, and diced
- 1 pear, peeled, cored, and diced
- ½ cup red wine
- 1 quart chicken broth
- 2 cups apple cider
- 1 16 oz. can diced tomatoes (Izard favors San Marzano)
- ¾ cup fish sauce
- ¾ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp sambal paste
- Freshly ground black pepper and salt

1 Heat 1 tbsp oil over high heat in a large soup pot. Add half of beef to pot and season with ¼ tsp pepper. Brown meat (5–7 minutes) and remove. Repeat with remaining beef. Remove from pot and set aside. **2** Add another tbsp vegetable oil to pot and lower heat to medium. Add onions and garlic and sauté until onion is translucent (about 3 minutes). **3** Add pineapple, apple, pear, and wine. Simmer to reduce the liquid by half (about 5–7 minutes). **4** Add cooked beef along with chicken broth, cider, tomatoes, fish sauce, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, mustard, and sambal. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. **5** Cover and simmer until beef cubes fall apart easily when poked with a fork (a little more than 4 hours). **6** Serve immediately or keep warm in a 200°F oven for up to 30 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning before serving.



“Serving the stew with Yorkshire pudding mimics the flavors of shepherd’s pie—but it’s so much simpler to make.”

Easy Yorkshire Pudding

SERVES 6 (12 PUDDINGS)

Izard’s take on Yorkshire pudding calls for bacon fat and bacon crumbles because, well, everything tastes better with bacon, right? “Amaze your guests by popping the puddings into the oven at the last minute,” says Izard. “They puff up like magic.”

- ½ lb. bacon (8 slices), cut into ½-inch pieces (opt for a cured, smoked variety)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 eggs, beaten

1 Preheat oven to 425°F. **2** In a dry sauté pan over medium heat, cook bacon until the fat is rendered and the meat is crisp, about 15 minutes. Remove bacon with a slotted spoon; set aside. Reserve fat from the pan. **3** Whisk flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl combine milk and eggs. Fold wet ingredients into dry mixture until combined into a smooth batter. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap; let sit for 30–60 minutes at room temperature. **4** Coat a 12-cup muffin tin with 1 tsp bacon fat per cup. Transfer to hot oven for 10 minutes. **5** Carefully remove muffin tin from oven; pour batter into each cup, filling up to two-thirds of cup. Return to oven. **6** Bake for 15 minutes, then reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Bake for another 12–15 minutes, until puffed and golden. **7** Before taking puddings out of the oven, use a food processor to chop cooked bacon into fine bits. Remove tin from oven and sprinkle puddings with bacon evenly as they cool and deflate slightly. Serve warm.



The New Double-Chocolate Brownie

Chocolate Bouchons

MAKES 24 IN A BOUCHON MOLD OR 30 IN A MINI-MUFFIN TIN

You can bake these cork-shaped cakes in a bouchon mold (silicone bouchon mold, \$30; williams-sonoma.com) to get the eye-pleasing cylinder, but a mini-muffin tin works as well. Serve them alone or with ice cream, whipped cream, fresh fruit—or, even better, all of the above!

- 3 eggs
- 1 2/3 cups sugar
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cocoa powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) butter, melted
- 2/3 cup milk chocolate chips
- 2/3 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup confectioners' sugar

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease muffin tin (not necessary for silicone mold).
- 2 In a large mixing bowl combine eggs, sugar, and vanilla with a mixer or whisk; set aside.
- 3 In a medium bowl sift together flour, cocoa powder, and salt.
- 4 Add 1/2 of the dry ingredients and 1/2 of the melted butter to egg and sugar mixture. Whisk until incorporated.
- 5 Repeat Step 4 until both mixtures are combined. Fold in chocolate chips.
- 6 Transfer batter into a piping bag (or a ziplock bag with one corner cut off). Fill each cup of mold or muffin tin to top.
- 7 Bake 20 minutes or until set but still a bit moist in the center (test with a toothpick).
- 8 Transfer pan to a wire rack; let cool for 15 minutes. Remove bouchons; let cool for another 30 minutes.
- 9 Dust with confectioners' sugar.

The New Negroni Before & After Cocktail

SERVES 1

Aperol, a kid sister to Campari, gives this crowd-pleasing winter libation a pleasant sweet-and-bitter taste profile. This cocktail's creator, *Girl & the Goat* house mixologist Ben Schiller, likes to serve it as an aperitif or a digestif, hence the moniker.

- 2 oz. (1/2 cup) gin
- 3/4 oz. (2 tsp) sweet vermouth
- 3/4 oz. (2 tsp) Aperol
- 1/2 oz. (1 tsp) Madeira

- 1 Combine ingredients in a mixing glass, add ice, and stir.
- 2 Strain into a coupe glass to serve.

Finesse Your Food Fast!

Layer your everyday meals with Izard's secret weapons for rich flavor and texture



FOR A SPICY KICK

While Izard loves sambal paste (which appears in both her tomato soup and stew), she's also a big fan of sriracha, an Asian-style hot sauce that's a notch spicier. Add a dollop to soy sauce for a punchy, bold steak marinade. *Huy Fong sriracha hot chili sauce*, \$6/17 oz.; amazon.com.



FOR A BOLD CRUNCH

Classic Wondra flour is a favorite tool for many chefs, says Izard. The ultra-fine powder stays clump-free in sauces and gravies. She dusts it on fish and chicken for a super-crispy coating when sautéing or frying. *Wondra flour*, \$7/13.5 oz.; amazon.com.



FOR A SALTY HINT

A dash of fish sauce, a staple of Thai cooking, gives an earthy flavor to stews or meat sauces. Izard also likes to blend it with fresh garlic and rosemary to create a paste to rub on beef when roasting or grilling. *Tra Chang fish sauce*, \$2/24 oz.; fooddepot.com.

