



COMFORT LEVEL

An extra hour
of recess for
good behavior

Prince Henry Sandwich

Dish Global Deli, \$5

Ah, *lunchtime*. Upon occasion, we've been known to claim it was our favorite class in school. And for legions of brown baggers, lunchtime didn't get any more perfect than a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. We didn't think it was possible to improve on this staple, but Dish Global Deli proved us wrong. Its Prince Henry sandwich pairs natural peanut butter with homemade mango raspberry jelly, served on lightly crisp nine-grain bread. Bananas are also included, but are optional. The sandwich is sweet, fun and refined.

1834 W. 25th St., Cleveland, (216) 589-9700, www.dishglobaldell.com

Potato Pancakes

Alvie and Gary's Jack's Deli and Restaurant, 3 for \$6.99

There's nothing not to love about potato pancakes: The mere scent of them can harken Hanukkah as much as a turkey pulled fresh from the oven conjures Thanksgiving.

Jack's Deli's take arrives nearly too hot to touch, but you'll have a tough time holding back. See

the way they crumble as you cut? That's freshness, kids. Smear some sour cream and applesauce onto each bite, relax and repeat. 14490 Cedar Road, University Heights, (216) 382-5350, www.jacksdeliandrestaurant.com

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Catching that first snowflake on your tongue

Meatloaf Sandwich

Lucky's Café, \$7.50

A sandwich is just two pieces of bread with something between them. A "sammich" — as it's conceived here — is carefully constructed and infused with love (and we all know that tastes *much* better). So when you've finished the day's to-dos, head over to Lucky's Café and order up the meatloaf sandwich any way you'd like — we had our piping-hot portion of the homespun classic with onions, peppers and subtle spices. It's served on baked-in-house Como, rustic Italian bread that crisps up on the press, and comes with chips, a pickle and your choice of condiments. We went with a classic, kid-friendly slice of Cheddar to top it all off. 777 Starkweather, Cleveland, (216) 622-7773, www.luckyscafe.com

COMFORT LEVEL

Walking barefoot through grass that someone else cut

Lobster Cassoulet

Pier W, \$41

Whenever anything would simmer on the stove for hours, we knew we were in for a treat. Pier W's lobster cassoulet proves this with an American twist on a traditional French country meal. Slow cooked in earthenware, this casserole-like dish arrives with a whole lobster's worth of buttery, tender meat atop creamy cannellini beans. The light, delicate flavor of the seafood perfectly

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Sitting in front of a fireplace with a good book

complements the heartiness of the beans. So scoop some onto your plate — we know you've been patient. Winton Place, 12700 Lake Ave., Lakewood, (216) 228-2250, www.selectrestaurants.com/pier/index.html

The Carnival

Three Birds, \$7

Some believe the pinnacle of any festival experience are the rides and the games. But we remember tugging on Dad's hand through the lines,

anxious for a taste of the most exalted of all fair foods: the funnel cake. Three

Birds harnesses that sticky-fingered childish bliss with its Carnival dessert. A fresh, hot funnel cake arrives accompanied by frozen chocolate bananas rolled in peanuts. Goopy caramel sauce and chantilly cream complete the experience, catering in a very grown-up way to our favorite childhood dreams. 18515 Detroit Ave., Lakewood, (216) 221-3500, www.3birdsrestaurant.com

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Makes you feel like fireworks on the Fourth of July

Matzoh Ball Soup

It's It Deli, \$6.25 for a quart

OK, we know recommending a Matzoh ball soup can be dangerous territory, and that no place is better than your bubbe's kitchen. We also want to acknowledge we chose a place on the West Side. But it is a deli, not a restaurant, so hear us out: It's It Deli has the goods. The strong, but not too-salty, broth provides the perfect backdrop for soft vegetables that add texture and color. The matzoh ball is hearty and smooth, sticking together until that first spoonful,

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Makes a cold seem totally surmountable

soup

and then it starts to crumble into delicious bits, incorporated throughout the soup. 11520 Clifton Blvd., Cleveland, (216) 651-3078

Carolina Pulled Pork Sandwich

Juniper Grille, \$7.95

It's hard to top a heaping pile of slow-cooked barbecued pork when it comes to Southern-style comfort. Luckily, downtown workers can get a midday fix in the form of Juniper Grille's multiple-napkins-required take on the classic pulled pork sandwich. (Warning: You won't go back to work smelling like you've been standing over a barbecue pit all day, but you may go back stained. Don't worry. It's worth the risk.) Served open-face style, the shredded pork is slathered in a sweet sauce that packs a kicky tang, mounded on Texas toast and topped with fried onion strings. The dish will leave you happy, full and ready to tackle the rest of your day with an extra dose of Southern Charm. 1332 Carnegie Ave., Cleveland, (216) 771-1334

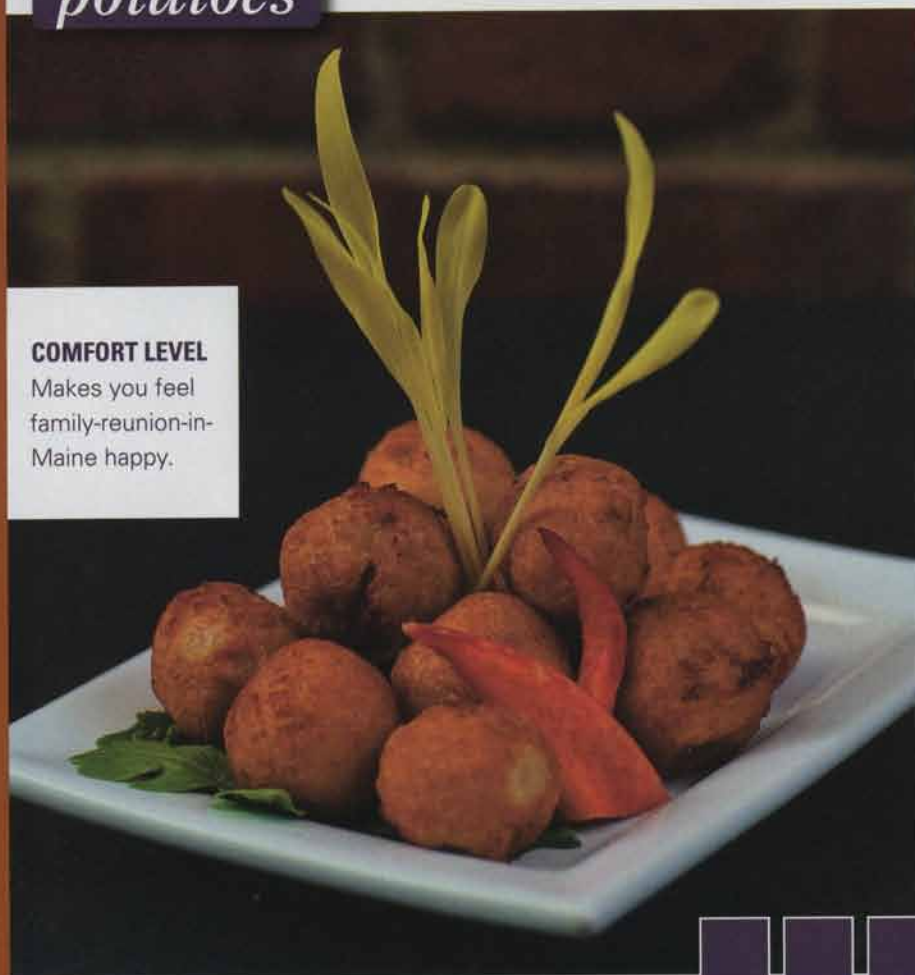
COMFORT LEVEL

A glass of sweet tea on the hottest day of the year

potatoes

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Makes you feel family-reunion-in-Maine happy.



Lobster Tots

Boulevard Blue, \$6

In grade school cafeterias, it was always cause for celebration when tater tots appeared on the line. Compared to the inauspicious mystery meats and questionable Jell-O, tater tots represented truth, justice and the American Way — or, at least, a way to eat “vegetables” in a thoroughly enjoyable fashion. Boulevard Blue has taken our fondness for the childhood favorite to a new level with its lobster tater tots. About 10 appear still steaming on a platter, looking like fresh, mini beignets. Bite into one, and you’ll sink deeper into your chair with happiness. The smooth potato mix, reminiscent of a Southern hush puppy in texture, is sprinkled liberally with buttery morsels of fresh lobster. The pleasing inside is surrounded, in the manner of the best of tots, with a perfectly crispy exterior. Slather on some of the accompanying avocado crème fraiche, and just like when you were a kid, you might not feel like sharing.

12718 Larchmere Blvd., Cleveland, (216) 721-5500, www.boulevardblue.com

Creamed Chicken Over Puffed Pastry

Treats Tea Room, \$6.95

When we were young, we were known to perform “surgery” on certain dishes to remove vegetables. This earned our parents’ reproach, and it certainly wouldn’t fly at dinner parties today. Therefore, we were pleased when served Treats Tea Room’s creamed chicken over puffed pastry — nary a vegetable in sight. A delicious block of flaky pastry is bathed in a warm, mild-

ly spiced sauce and diced chicken breast. At once, it evokes casseroles and chipped beef and creamed soups. It’s uncomplicated, but that’s refreshing. It’s exactly the dish we would have cooked when we were younger, if we were allowed to touch the stove. 1325 Linda St., Rocky River, (440) 331-3414

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Like a new, warm pair of fuzzy slippers

Traditional Pierogi

Sokolowski's University Inn, 5 for \$8.95

Sokolowski’s has been serving up the most comforting of comfort foods since before it was called comfort food. In-the-know Clevelanders come here for their fix of stuffed cabbage and chicken paprikash and kielbasa. But for the ultimate indulgence, it doesn’t get any better than the pierogis. They’re presented on your plate in a bath of butter-and-onion goodness. The pierogis themselves are thoroughly tender, with

a tasty touch of caramelization on the top of each one. Bite in, and the onion-infused butter melts into the filling, which uses the divine ratio of potato to cheese. Dab a little sour cream onto these pierogis, and you’ll

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Makes you ready for a post-meal nap, no matter what’s on your mind

be glad you live in Cleveland, no matter if your family’s roots are in Krakow or Cairo. 1201 University Road, Tremont, (216) 771-9236, www.sokolowskis.com