

SCENE-STEALING SIDES

Any food lover knows that while the main dish is important, it's the sides that make the meal. Here, local chefs share go-to seasonal sides that will have guests bypassing the turkey as they reach for seconds – and thirds.



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Serves 2

Johnny Besch, executive chef, BLVD Steakhouse (817 W. Lake St.)

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- ¼ pound bacon
- 1 red bell pepper
- 2 eggs
- lime wedge
- cup grapeseed oil
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar or pickle juice
- salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350. Clean and trim the Brussels sprouts by cutting the bottom off and splitting them in half. Toss with grapeseed oil, salt, and pepper. Roast 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly caramelized and tender but not mushy.

Dice and cook bacon until crispy. Strain off bacon grease and set aside. Roast red bell pepper over

an open flame. (If you don't have a gas range, place whole peppers in a 400-degree oven until soft and caramelized.) Place roasted peppers in a mixing bowl with a lid and set aside on a countertop until cooled to room temperature.

When the peppers are cool enough to handle, remove skin and seeds and discard. Transfer the pepper to a blender and purée until smooth. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper

In a saucepot, bring water to a boil. Add white vinegar or pickle juice to the pot. Crack one egg and gently place in the simmering water. You don't want the water to boil too rapidly; it might break apart the egg. Give the water a swirl with a spoon to keep the egg moving. Cook the poached egg as long as you desire (2 to 3 minutes for a nice runny yolk).

Place a few spoonfuls of red pepper sauce in your dish. Toss the roasted Brussels sprouts with the cooked bacon. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Place the Brussels sprouts mix over the red pepper sauce and top with a poached egg. Squeeze lime over the top.



MISS LIZZY'S OVER THE TOP MACARONI AND CHEESE

Serves 10-12

"When family and friends get together over food, it's therapy. Whatever was happening before we gathered at the table no longer exists. We laugh, drink, eat, and taste the love – and that makes all the difference."—**Jamie Gilmore**, CEO/chef, Lizzy J Café and Catering (2205 W. Montrose Ave.)

- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 cups yellow mild cheese
- 2 cups extra-sharp white cheddar
- 1 cup Monterey Jack
- 1 cup Gruyère
- 1 16-ounce pasta of your choice (I prefer cavatappi.)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 stick + 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons AP flour
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- parsley, chopped (fresh or dried)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Boil the pasta in salted water. Drain and set aside. Make a roux by combining a fat (butter) and starch (flour). Whisk in the milk products and the smoked paprika, seasoning at every step. Cook until thick. Add in shredded cheeses and stir until melted. Leave a cup of your favorite cheese to place on top.

Combine cheese sauce with cooked pasta. Transfer half of the mixture to a baking dish, sprinkle with more shredded cheese. Top with another layer of mac and cheese, then the saved shredded cheese. Mix 2 tablespoons melted butter, breadcrumbs and parsley. Bake until bubbly and golden brown, about 40 minutes.

CANDIED YAMS

Serves 6

"This recipe is the sweetest representation of fall. It's perfect for entertaining or making week-night dinners a little more special."—**Dominique Leach**, chef/owner, Lexington Betty Smokehouse (6954 W. North Ave.)

- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups water



Evenly spread potatoes out in a medium saucepan. In a separate bowl, whisk both sugars, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and water until evenly combined. Pour the mix over the potatoes. Cover the pot and cook potatoes on a low flame for 20 minutes. Remove the cover and cook for another 20 minutes. When the sauce reduces and the potatoes are tender, mix in vanilla and butter. Serve hot.



KASE SPAETZLE

Serves 4

"Kase Spaetzle is essentially a German comfort food. If you don't want to make spaetzle from scratch, you can buy dried spaetzle in the international section."—**Mark Steuer**, chef/owner, Funkenhausen (1709 W. Chicago Ave.)

FOR THE SPAETZLE

- 1 cup egg yolk (about 4 to 5 eggs)
- 3 whole eggs
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1/2 cup warm water

In a mixer (or by hand if you feel like a workout) whisk eggs, yolks and seasonings until foamy. Add flour 1/2 cup at a time until well incorporated, thinning with water if necessary. Using a ricer or a spaetzle maker, press dough into salted boiling water and

allow to cook for 30 seconds, or until noodles float. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to an oiled sheet tray and allow to cool. Reserve 1 cup of pasta water.

TO TOP

- 2 cups shredded Alpine cheese (I like a mix of Gruyère, Emmentaler, and Jarlsberg.)
- 2 onions, diced
- black pepper
- chives, chopped to garnish

To make the onions, heat olive oil in a sauté pan until it begins to smoke, then add the onions and quickly brown them. (I like them slightly burnt for this recipe.)

Place cooked spaetzle in a sauté pan and add a little water to reheat. Add a handful of cheese and swirl the pan to melt, adding small ladles of water as needed to ensure the cheese doesn't stick. Continue to add cheese and water until all cheese is incorporated. Serve in a bowl and top with lots of black pepper, charred onions, and chives.



CREAMED SWISS CHARD

Serves 4

Debbie Gold, executive chef, The Barn Steakhouse (1016 Church St., Evanston)

- 2 1/2 cups Swiss chard
- 1/2 cup cipollini onions
- 2 large shallots, sliced thin
- 1 ounce chopped garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1-2 ounces Wondra flour
- 16 ounces heavy cream
- 1/2 cup self-rising flour
- salt to taste
- rice bran oil

Remove chard from stem. Wash and chop greens. Sweat greens in small amount of rice bran oil, then wilt and remove from pan. Strain off excess liquid, pressing lightly as needed. Add a little more rice bran oil to pan, then add onions and garlic. Sweat until tender. Add black pepper and butter, then melt and sprinkle with Wondra flour. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly start adding cream, stirring constantly until added. Simmer for a few minutes, stirring often. Remove from heat and cool.

Cut onions in half lengthwise, doing your best to keep them from falling apart. Toss with oil and salt, then brown in saucepan, about 1 minute each side.

Marinate shallots in buttermilk. Strain and toss in self-rising flour seasoned with salt. Fry in oil at 325 degrees until lightly golden and crispy, about 2 minutes each side. Place onions in a shallow dish, add Swiss chard on top, and finish with fried shallots.