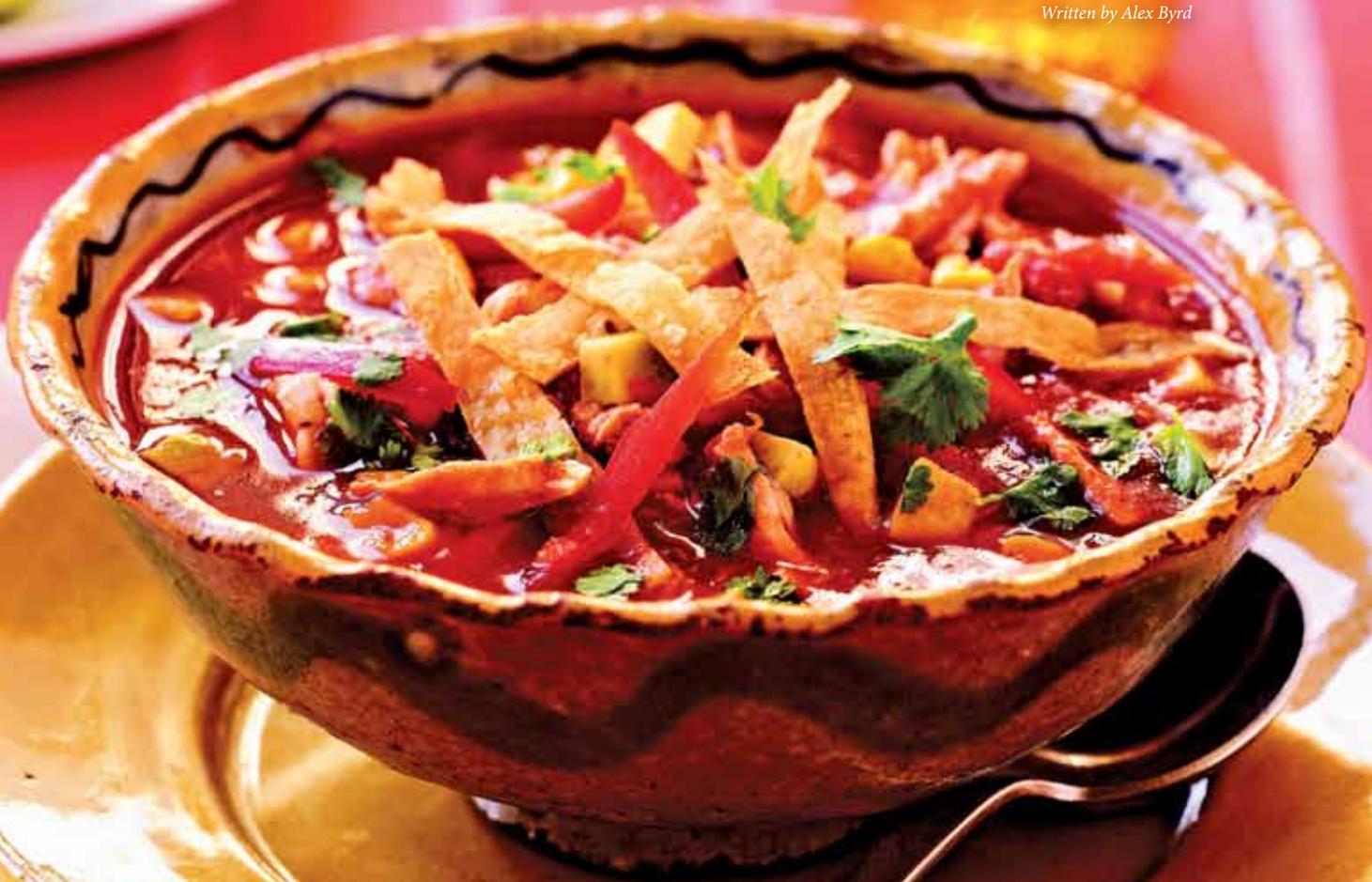


Foods That *Warm* You

Local restaurants combat cold weather with red hot meals

Written by Alex Byrd



Warm up your winter with a savory bowl of tortilla soup



The sausage gumbo is a favorite among Bake Shoppe regulars



El Rey Cuban and Mexican Cuisine offers authentic, spicy Cuban dishes

Cuban Flavor

Are the blustery winds of winter giving you a chill? Warm up with home-style, just-like-mom-used-to-make entrées from these tasty Cy-Fair eateries. They are sure to please the pickiest of taste buds.

The Bake Shoppe and Café

12724 Grant Rd.
Cypress
281-320-2253

Owner Melissa Newbould credits her mouth-watering menu to her mother, Connie Ann, and grandmother Stella. With edible works of art like pumpkin cupcakes, pecan caramel praline bread pudding, cheesecake, and homemade chicken sausage gumbo, this is definitely a winter-worthy stop. "It's good, down-home cooking," Newbould says. They also offer frozen casseroles for families that are craving home-cooked meals but are limited on time.

Cheddar's Casual Cafe

23948 N.W. Fwy.
Cypress
281-256-2259

This casual café never disappoints the pockets or appetites of its patrons because of the high quality and diverse nature of the meal selection. Entrées like shepherd's pie topped with creamy meat sauce and pork baby back ribs will be just enough to induce salivation. "Anyone will feel welcome here," says restaurant manager, Thomas Wade. "Cheddar's creates perfect, home-style, made-from-scratch meals."

Cypress Station Grill

26010 Hempstead Rd.
Cypress
281-304-1290

During the cold months, the family-owned restaurant will be dishing out "total comfort food," says owner Amanda Cano. With menu items like pork chops stuffed with gorgonzola cheese, varieties of steak, succulent seafood platters, freshly made rolls, and pastas accented with homemade sauce, there are plenty of tummy-warming options. "I'm so excited to serve pot pies and sweet potatoes. The main ingredient is love," Cano smiles.

El Rey Cuban and Mexican Cuisine

8422 Hwy. 6 N.
Houston
281-345-8088

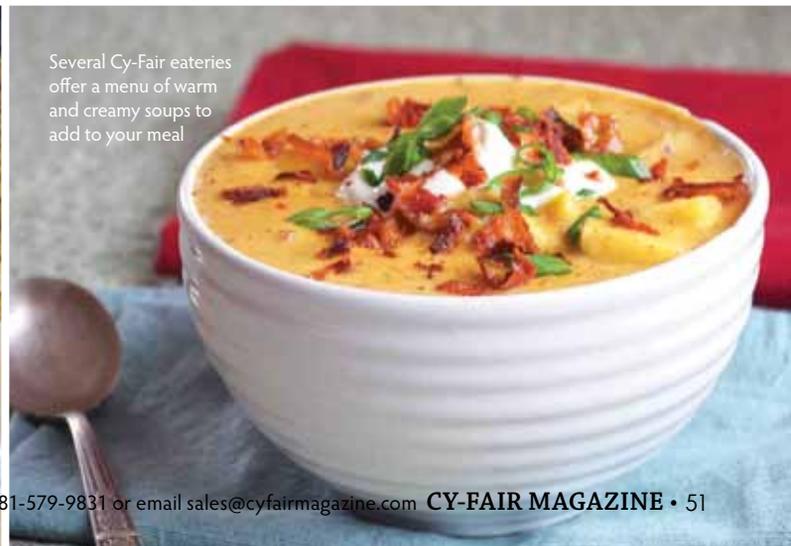
If it's spicy flavor and fresh ingredients you crave, El Rey is the perfect spot. For an authentic Cuban lunch, try the ropa vieja featuring savory shredded beef stewed in a tomato broth. "Diners tend to like our classic chicken tortilla soup or the mind-blowing Cuban tacos," says owner Manny Diaz. Their in-house bakery also provides delicious assortments of muffins, flan, and tres leches to complete your dining experience.

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Tasty Choices



Piled high with mouth-watering toppings, the Cypress Station Grill belly buster burger will satisfy any hunger craving



Several Cy-Fair eateries offer a menu of warm and creamy soups to add to your meal

Try a smothered in deliciousness rodeo burger from Cypress Station Grill



Tempting Toppings

La Madeleine

19710 N.W. Fwy., #100
Houston
281-720-100

Well-known for their signature creamy tomato basil soup, La Madeleine French Country Café makes a habit of serving up multiple entrees to warm patrons' bellies. "I love how creamy their shrimp crêpe florentine is. I eat it every time I come here," says diner Jay Jackson. If it's a succulent sandwich you are craving, try their French dip piled with roast beef, caramelized onions, horseradish sauce, Gruyere cheese, and served with a steaming bowl of French onion soup for dipping. Don't miss their traditional crepes filled with items like chicken, spinach, or shrimp.

Mel's Country Café

24814 Stanolind Rd.
Tomball
281-255-6357

This quaint personification of country goodness supplies flavorful favorites such as the Cajun grilled chicken breast, chicken fried chicken, and a triple-layer sandwich accented with ham, turkey, Swiss cheese, and raspberry sauce called Mel's Monte Cristo. This winter, Mel's is offering a new homemade bourbon chocolate fudge pecan pie served warm with ice cream and caramel sauce on top. Stop by to find out why Cy-Fairians are raving about Mel's.

Order a side of warm fries or steaming soup with your gourmet burger from Red Robin



Red Robin

7620 Katy Fwy., #465
Houston
713-476-9096

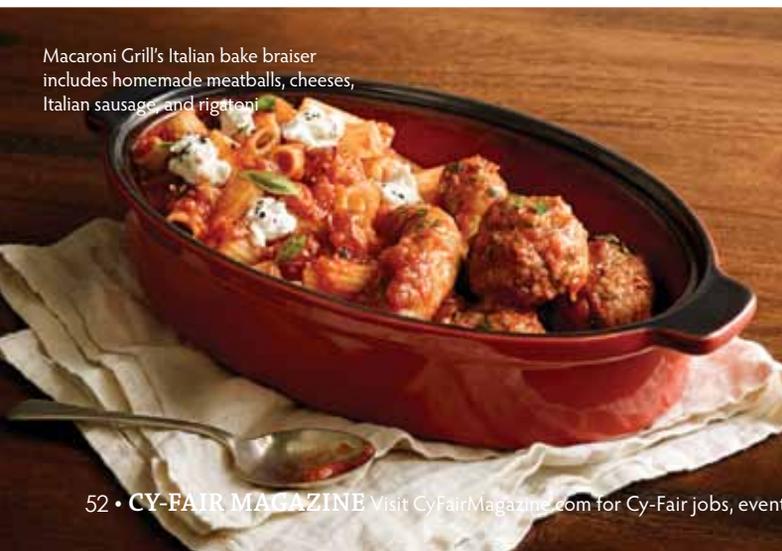
The spiced pumpkin pie shake contains Libby's pumpkin pie filling, vanilla soft serve, crumbled graham crackers, and sweet nutmeg. These sharp flavors are only a little taste of what this quintessential gourmet burger restaurant has to offer. "All of our desserts are a source of comfort, from the shareable mountain high mudd pie to the elegant very red velvet cake," says Bobby Reynolds, a Red Robin franchisee. In addition to sweet essences, Red Robin has reeled in the Oktoberfest Burger layered with a flame-grilled beef patty, Black Forest ham, Swiss cheese, tangy beer mustard, and sautéed onions on a delicious pretzel bun.

Romano's Macaroni Grill

7607 FM 1960 W. Rd.
Houston
281-955-1388

Satisfying and unlimited amounts of bread highlighted with seasoned olive oil will carry your appetite to the main course of endless possibilities at Romano's Macaroni Grill. There are classic Italian dishes along with new creations such as the Chianti BBQ steak meal that is made up of sirloin cap steak, prosciutto mac-cheese, grilled vegetables, garlic dip, and crostini. Order up the chicken under a brick, which features a sage-roasted half chicken, asparagus, and roasted potatoes.

Macaroni Grill's Italian bake braiser includes homemade meatballs, cheeses, Italian sausage, and rigatoni



Succulent Sandwiches

Topped with layers of meat, cheese, and sauce, La Madeleine's French dip sandwich is accompanied by a cup of French onion soup



Cheddar's pot pie serves as a classic comfort food favorite among patrons



The Shack

16602 Cypress Rosehill Rd.
Cypress
281-256-1575

This vintage-home-turned-restaurant perfects the cookout feel with distinctive food to match. The large patio with its unorthodox decorations creates a perfect scene for any Cypress night. "Burgers are what we are known for," says restaurant owner, Joe Doung. "We are everything that represents great Texas food." The Shack reinvented the burger with new complimentary flavors like spicy Thai peanut sauce, guacamole, and spicy Asian fusion brisket. The turkey burger and Tokyo hustle chicken sandwich with teriyaki sauce and sliced pineapples are also some of the many tasty alternatives to red meat.

Smallcakes

12149E FM 1960 W.
Houston
281-671-0104

This cutesy, gourmet eatery is fulfilling the sweet tooth of local Cy-Fairians. Smallcakes cooks their sugar creations fresh daily with several different essences to choose from. The winter season will showcase gingerbread, peppermint, caramel apple pie flavors, as well as tiramisu cupcakes, which are soaked in hazelnut coffee. "Not only do we offer delicious, moist cakes, but we like to help schools and participate in non-profit events," says owner Nadia Saqr. "We want to put a smile on your face with our cupcakes."

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CFM

Try Romano's Macroni Grill's pasta milano for a scrumptious bowl of Tuscany goodness



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