

REVIEW

Comfort food rocks at Toasted

By **HEATHER MCPHERSON**
Food Editor

From the get-go it has a primal ooze that shifts the body into comfort-zone overdrive. At its essence are two ingredients: a carb crunch followed by a liquid blanket of calcium. And now the humble grilled-cheese sandwich is evolving from home-style to restaurant fare.

With the opening of **Toasted** in Winter Park, Central Florida now has an eatery dedicated to the ooey-goey marriage of cheese and bread.

The quick-service restaurant features walk-up counter service with **10 grilled-cheese choices** (\$6-\$7). Burgers (\$5.75-\$7) and salads (\$6.25-\$7.50) are also on the menu but the oversized periodic table of cheese on the wall leaves no doubt what to order.

By definition, cheese should dominate in a grilled-cheese sandwich, but there are ingredients that can enhance.

The signature **braised brisket** (\$7) is a meld of fontina cheese, tender beef, smoky barbecue sauce and sweet-tea caramelized onions. The brisket adds texture and a richness that is over the top.

The **fig and goat** (\$6.25) blends havarti and goat cheeses, basil leaves, honey and a slather of fig preserves. The **pesto chicken** (\$6.50) comes together over mozzarella with spiced tomato chutney and arugula.

Perhaps the most creative offering is the **forever fall** (\$6), a combo of white cheddar, thinly sliced roasted sweet potatoes and apple chutney.

These rich sandwiches hardly need accompaniments. If you want to splurge, try the truffle-rosemary fries (\$2.50) or the house mac & cheese (\$2.50), a mash-up of nutty Jarlsberg, extra-sharp cheddar and sultry gruyere.

Kudos to the owners for including vegan and vegetarian options.

There's a linguistic question that deserves a mention. Toasted or grilled? Much like the Thanksgiving stuffing/dressing debate, where you live may determine how you refer to melted cheese locked between two slabs of bread.

"Toasted cheese is a term I've heard in



GEORGE SKENE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Grilled cheese sandwiches at Toasted include forever fall and braised brisket.

Toasted

Where: 1945 Aloma Ave., Winter Park (at Lakemont Avenue in the Winter Park Corners plaza)

When: 10:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.
Sunday-Wednesday, 10:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m.

How much: \$5-\$7.25

Beverages: Soft drinks

Extras: Catering, curbside pickup, outside dining, takeout, vegan friendly

Wheelchair access: Easy

Credit: American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa

Online: igettoast.com

Call: 407-960-3922

Britain," says Marlena Spieler, author of "Grilled Cheese: 50 Recipes to Make You Melt." Spieler links melted cheese to the Brits and thinks toasted cheese is "a Scottish and possibly Yorkshire term."

So as long as the sandwiches come to the table warm and put us into a comfort-food frame of mind, grilled and toasted can be used interchangeably.

Grilled-cheese patrol

Don't overlook these menu items elsewhere:

■ **Bananas a Modern American Diner**, 924 N. Mills Ave., Orlando; 407-480-2200; bananasdiner.com: A three-cheese concoction (\$6.99) served with tomato sage bisque.

■ **B&B Junction**, 2103 W. Fairbanks Ave., Winter Park; 407-513-4134; bbjunction.com: Try the combo of brie, goat cheese, pesto aioli, watercress and fruit jam (\$7).

■ **Frank & Stein's**, 150 S. Magnolia Ave., Orlando; 407-412-9230; frankandsteins.com: Get the trio of cheese (\$3.99) with cheddar, provolone and American.

■ **Panera**, various locations including 296 E. Michigan St., Orlando; 407-481-9880; panerabread.com: The classic (\$5.99) has organic American on rustic bread.

■ **Truffles**, 430 N. Orlando Ave., Winter Park (Winter Park Village); 407-261-0163; trufflescafe.com: Pimento cheese (\$9) on sourdough with tomato dill soup.

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