

When consumers participated in the 2007 *Comfort Food: Nostalgia Meets Contemporary* survey from Chicago, IL-based Olson Communications, they were asked to describe their favorite comfort foods. The top choices were desserts such as pies, cakes, cupcakes, candy and chocolate. Armed with such powerful information, deli operators can pounce on such consumer passion by merchandising desserts as part of meal deals.



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COMFORT FOODS THRIVE IN TOUGH TIMES

When facing a tight pocketbook, consumers
revert to the familiar flavors of home

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

During hard economic times, consumers always revert back to the basics. For many people, this brings back memories of home, family and a simpler time, when home-cooked foods played a more central role in family life. Who doesn't have memories of the extended family gathered around a table filled with comforting foods such as meat loaf and mashed pota-

toes, corned beef and cabbage or even chicken and dumplings? No matter what part of the nation you hail from, there's a particular food that calls you home.

The current economic climate is one reason that a 2007 study conducted by New York-based Datamonitor America—cited in the Madison, WI-based International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association's (IDDBA) report, *What's in Store 2008*—revealed that craving

for nostalgic foods is on the rise. Twenty percent of the respondents surveyed claimed they had purchased nostalgic comfort foods more often in the past year than they had in previous years.

More consumers are now opting to dine at home rather than eating out to save money, but many find they have even less time to prepare their favorite comfort foods due to an increased work schedule caused