

Grilled Cheese



The slice is right. Bread is your vessel, so [choose your loaf wisely](#). Heidi Gibson of [The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen](#) in San Francisco swears by an artisan levain. Same goes for Curren. We switch it up with a different bread for every sandwich, but for the classic, we follow suit with two slices of sourdough.

And if you think fresh is best, you may be wrong. "Stale bread makes the best grilled cheese," Sue Conley, owner of [Cowgirl Creamery](#) in San Francisco, says. This way the bread soaks up the butter and crisps up beautifully.

Take it easy. "Low and slow, baby," Gibson says. "We like to say that grilled cheese is love, and making grilled cheese is like making love: For best results, take your time and don't rush it." It takes less than 10 minutes to make a grilled cheese, but still give enough time to let the bread get crispy and the cheese melt completely.

You do you. We wanted to see if our experts were purists about keeping it strictly cheesy. The consensus: Put in whatever you want. This is pure comfort food, so go your own way.

Kurt Beecher Dammeier, owner of [Beecher's Handmade Cheese](#) in NYC and Seattle, explains, "Everyone has their own favorite way to make grilled cheese, so I'm not a purist. I love Mama Lil's peppers, so I'll add some of those from time to time." Curren, on the other hand, likes [bacon](#), avocado, ham and even apples in his grilled cheeses.

Say cheese. When it comes to the melted stuff, everyone has a different preference on cheese. Dammeier has memories of growing up with Tillamook cheddar, but now he uses a blend of Flagship (a raw cow's-milk cheese) and Just Jack (Beecher's version of Monterey Jack) cheeses.

"It's important to use a good melter, like jack, Muenster, fontina, Gouda or medium cheddar, to get that grilled cheese goeyness," Gibson says, breaking down the science of it. "But you can combine something stronger, like chèvre, blue cheese or Gruyère (which would all be too strong and weird on their own) with something milder."

Now go and make these five grate grilled combos, cheese and thank you.

Make It Extra Cheesy

We love cheese as much as you do. So we went all out with a full cup of [four types of cheese](#) in this sandwich. Gibson even talked us through the steps of working with many cheeses. "With hard cheeses, consider shredding them instead of slicing; they'll melt easier. Some folks shred all the cheese and mix it, but I like to keep the layers separate, so I can taste distinctive flavors in the sandwich."

2 slices sourdough + ¼ c grated cheddar cheese + ¼ c grated Gouda cheese + ¼ c grated Gruyère cheese + ¼ c grated aged provolone cheese + 2 tbsp unsalted butter + 1 garlic clove, peeled and smashed

Lay out one slice of bread and top with the cheeses. Place the remaining slice of bread over top and press lightly. In a medium nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium heat with the garlic clove. Cook the grilled cheese weighed down with a sandwich press, flipping once, until the cheese has melted and the bread is golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Halve the sandwich diagonally and serve.

Make It Sweet

This sandwich could almost be dessert. Whipped ricotta and [fresh berries](#) make for the perfect oozy filling between crispy cinnamon swirl bread.

¼ c ricotta + 2 tbsp honey, divided + 1½ tsp lemon zest + ¼ tsp salt + 2 slices cinnamon swirl bread + ¼ c mixed berries + 2 tbsp unsalted butter

In a small bowl, whisk the ricotta with 1 tablespoon of the honey, the lemon zest and salt until light and fluffy, 2 minutes. Lay out one slice of bread and top with the whipped ricotta, mixed berries and the remaining tablespoon of honey. Top with the remaining slice of bread and press lightly. In a medium nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Cook the grilled cheese, flipping once, until the cheese has melted and the bread is golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Halve the sandwich diagonally and serve.

Make It Fancy

Let's elevate the childhood favorite, shall we? Conley told us about the current grilled cheese at Cowgirl Creamery: ricotta and raclette with quince-apple jam. We were inspired and went with [Brie](#) and fig preserves—on brioche, of course.

1 brioche bun, halved + 2 tbsp fig preserves + 4 oz Brie, thinly sliced + 2 tbsp chopped pecans + 2 tbsp unsalted butter

Lay out the bottom half of the brioche bun. Spread with the fig preserves and top with the Brie and pecans. Place the remaining half of the bun over top and press lightly. In a medium nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Cook the grilled cheese weighed down with a sandwich press, flipping once, until the cheese has melted and the bread is golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Halve the sandwich and serve.

Make It Ratchet

No matter how refined your palate may be, you're never above American cheese and [pepperoni](#). Curren claims that the best grilled cheese is from his mother's kitchen, and so is ours. Look, sometimes it's OK to be basic.

2 slices white bread + 4 slices American cheese + 4 slices (1 oz) pepperoni + 2 tbsp unsalted butter

Lay out one slice of bread and top with the cheese and pepperoni slices. Place the remaining slice of bread over top and press lightly. In a medium nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Cook the grilled cheese weighed with a sandwich press, flipping once, until the cheese has melted and the bread is golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Halve the sandwich diagonally and serve.

Make It Breakfast

There is never a bad time for grilled cheese, especially for breakfast (think: [croque madame](#)). By using a croissant as your bread, you get a buttery and super-flaky sando that's perfect with your morning coffee. "An egg over easy," Gibson shares as her favorite grilled cheese topping, which happens to be the kicker for this version. "It's a mess, but who cares? Live it up."

1 croissant, halved + ½ c grated Swiss + 2 strips cooked bacon + 1 tbsp unsalted butter + 1 fried egg, for serving

Lay out the bottom half of the croissant and top with the Swiss and bacon. Place the remaining half of the croissant over top and press lightly. In a medium nonstick skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Cook the grilled cheese weighed down with a sandwich press, flipping once, until the cheese has melted and the croissant is golden brown, 2 minutes per side. Top with a fried egg and serve.