



Create Your Own Panini

What is Panini?

Panini is Italian for sandwich or roll. The difference between this and your typical sandwich is that it is grilled on both sides and weighted down during grilling to smash the sandwich together and make the crust more crispy. This also melts or fuses the ingredients together for a delicious flavor.

Do I need a Panini Press?

A Panini Press is a two-sided electric grill that cooks and presses the sandwich. While a Panini Press can be handy for grilling as well as making sandwiches, you don't really need one. You can get the same effect with a simple clam-shell type grill, or by using a spatula and pressing firmly on the top of the sandwich for about 10 seconds on each side. A grill pan (one with a ridged grilling surface) really works well.

What type of bread should I use?

A variety of breads make good Panini, especially those that are heavy and flavorful. Just avoid soft breads and tasteless white bread. Focaccia is a popular choice. Other breads to try include: Crusty Italian bread, whole grain country bread, hearty artisan breads, and ciabatta.

Are certain ingredients best?

There are no limits when it comes to creating a great Panini. Choose flavors that you like and be creative. Here are some suggestions for sandwich fillings.

Cheese - (Lowfat varieties work well) mozzarella, ricotta, asiago, goat cheese, gruyere, gorgonzola, provolone, cheddar, gouda, and lowfat cream cheese.

Vegetables - roasted peppers, bell peppers (red, green, yellow), mushrooms, fresh tomatoes, eggplant, mixed greens, artichokes, black olives, hot peppers, onions, shallots, chopped garlic, white beans, chickpeas and spinach.

Meat - Choose meat that has been cooked and is thinly sliced. Choose from chicken, turkey, tuna, prosciutto, ham, salmon, roast beef, sausage and pork.

Spreads - pesto, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, red wine vinegar, honey/mustard, cranberry sauce, Dijon mustard, spicy whole grain mustard, horseradish and a variety of tapenades.

Preparing a Panini for grilling:

When assembling your sandwich layer sliced or grated cheese next to the bottom and top slices of the bread to hold the sandwich together. Layer the other ingredients (vegetables, meat, sauce, etc.) and combine. Spray the outside of the sandwich lightly with cooking spray and place on a grill. If you are using a grill pan, use your spatula to press the sandwich for about 10 seconds, and repeat after you turn the sandwich to grill the other side. If you are using a 2-sided grill, allow the Panini to heat for several minutes.

If you need a few suggestions to get started in creating your own Panini, here are some flavor combinations to try:

- Grilled vegetables and Asiago Cheese
- Tuna salad and Cheddar
- Grilled marinated steak, spinach, blue cheese and horseradish mayo
- Smoked turkey, Provolone, caramelized onions and honey mustard
- Chicken, Provolone and basil pesto
- Roast beef, Pepper Jack cheese, sautéed peppers and onions and mayo
- Grilled eggplant, Mozzarella and marinara sauce
- Ham, Swiss cheese and honey mustard
- Grilled chicken, grilled pineapple and Teriyaki Glace
- Fresh Mozzarella, marinated artichokes, peppers, garlic and olive oil
- Grilled zucchini, eggplant, red peppers and Pepper Goat cheese