



## GRILLED CHEESE

Who doesn't love a gooey grilled cheese sandwich. Simple to make and especially appropriate for cold weather. This delicacy dates back to ancient Rome, and, according to Food Timeline, was prominently featured in Roman cookbooks.

Fast-forward to the 1920s, when in the midst of the Great Depression, Americans were looking toward economical grocery purchases. Newly released products such as sliced white bread, (enter Wonder Bread) and American processed cheese (enter Kraft singles). Grilled cheese consumption took off.

By the 1940s, grilled cheese connoisseurs had discovered the crispiness that would result from buttering the outsides of the bread before frying the sandwich in a pan. It was then during World War II that mostly white bread and American cheese were used for the sandwiches that became so popular they landed a place in the 1945 U.S. Navy cookbook according to Food Timeline. Grilled cheese isn't strictly an American food, but variations of the sandwich exist across cultures, including the *toastie* in England and the *bauru* in Brazil.

There are variations too numerous to count today, given the variety of cheeses and breads that can be used. Here is my favorite courtesy of my Grandmother:

## THE BEST GRILLED CHEESE (MY GRANDMOTHER'S!)

Serves 4

My Grandmother was way ahead of her time with delicious techniques. Her secret to the best and fastest grilled cheese you'll ever have is *Mayonnaise!* It won't burn as easily as butter and the result is crisp and delicious. Of course, you can add anything to the filling including thinly sliced prosciutto or any other salumi that you like as well as spicy greens like arugula.

8 1/2-inch-thick slices of good chewy rustic bread

1-1/2 tablespoons smooth Dijon mustard

8 ounces shredded extra sharp cheddar or Gruyere cheese or a combination

1/2 cup mayonnaise

Add ins (optional):

- 4 strips applewood smoked bacon crisply fried or baked
- Slices of good ham, prosciutto or other salumi
- Almond or other nut butter that you like
- Chopped Major Grey or other chutney that you like
- Membrillo or Fig Jam
- Sliced tart apples
- Sliced sauteed mushrooms
- Simply dressed arugula or watercress

Brush 4 of the bread slices with mustard and divide the cheese among them. Top with the cheese and any add ins. Place the remaining 4 slices of bread on top and spread with half the mayonnaise.

Heat a large non-stick frying pan or griddle over medium heat until hot, about 3 minutes. Place the sandwiches mayonnaise side down in the pan and cook until the bottoms are golden brown, and the cheese starts to melt, about 4 minutes. Spread the remaining half of the mayonnaise on top of the sandwiches, turn over and cook until the second sides are golden brown, and the cheese completely melted, another 4 minutes or so. You may have to do this in batches. If so, heat your oven to 275 degrees and place cooked sandwiches in the oven to keep warm while you finish the rest.

Let the sandwiches cool for a minute or two before cutting them in half and devouring.