

Let's Open a Sandwich Shop



Mediterranean Chicken Subwich with artichokes, sundried tomatos, feta, and arugula

When I invited one of my favorite Austin bands, Courier, to play in Chicago as part of their acoustic home tour -they said yes - asking only for a space to play, an audience of 15 to share their music with, and a meal since they'd be on the road! In exchange for a private concert, dinner was the least I could do! But, what shall we have? I asked myself. We could order in Chicago-style pizza, but some friends would be arriving later in the evening and keeping it warm could be a challenge. Not to mention, I've had way too much pizza since I've arrived in The Windy City so I'm trying to balance it out with healthy options. When roaming my new favorite grocery store: Trader Joe's (no, we didn't have this in Austin!), I walked by fresh baguettes for \$2 each and became inspired to make homemade sandwiches. With only a few ingredients, homemade gourmet sandwiches would be reasonably priced, easy to make and serve without having to keep them warm, and serve many people. Oh, and can you say finger/food? This means less dishes/serving ware, and super casual.

So, I set out to make this happen. And, I might now have a new obsession and go-to party menu when I host a gathering again in the future. You can mix up the bread, ingredients, and get creative, never making the same sandwich twice, unless it's so good, you can't stop making it. I decided to keep things simple and make two options, one vegetarian. (For my gluten-free readers, I'm still thinking about an appropriate substitute for the bread).

The veggie sandwich would be a Caprese sandwich where I layered tomatoes, then mozzarella rounds (I bought a log with precut slices), then tomatoes again, topped it with basil and drizzled balsamic vinegar on top before placing the bread on top and slicing.



Caprese sandwich with tomatoes, mozzarella, basil, and balsamic vinaigrette.

The other would be a Mediterranean Chicken Subwich (this word is way more fun than plain old 'sub') with grilled rosemary chicken breasts I purchased from the prepared foods section of Whole Foods, sliced up and lined on top of the bottom piece of the bread, then topped it with diced artichoke hearts, chopped sundried tomatoes, arugula, and I poured some of the sundried tomato-infused oil from the jar on the top slice of the bread for flavor and to add moisture before placing the top on and slicing.



Mediterranean Chicken Subwich (side view)

I used whole wheat loaves for both sandwiches to keep them as healthy as possible. The trickiest part was pressing the top down and cutting the slices without the insides sliding out (mozzarella is slippery!). It worked best when I could push down on the top with one hand, pressing down on both sides of the knife to cut through the tougher outer part of the bread. Also, consider buying a box of toothpicks with colored flags on them and sticking them in each sandwich piece to hold them together until the guests arrive. I served the sandwiches with kettle potato chips and dill pickle spears.

I'll include both recipes below, but feel free to get creative next time you need to feed a fun crowd - and without having to spend too much, use the oven, or wash too many dishes! My guests were actually surprised to know I made the sandwiches myself (though I mentioned I didn't bake the bread or cook the chicken), and after sending photos to sister Allyson, we're now considering opening a sandwich shop. Who will dine with us?

Caprese Sandwich

Ingredients

- One long whole wheat baguette or bread of your choice
- Two large tomatoes
- One cylinder or log of mozzarella, pre-sliced if you can find it
- One package or bunch of fresh basil
- Two tablespoons of balsamic vinegar

Instructions

- On a flat surface, cutting board, or metal cookie sheet, use a bread knife to slice through the baguette longwise.
- Slice both tomatoes into 1/4 inch thick slices.
- Wash the basil leaves, bunch up on a cutting board, and slice into small strips.
- Lay tomato rounds in a row across the bottom of the baguette from end to end.
- Lay mozzarella slices on top of tomato slices from end to end.
- Lay remaining tomato slices on top of mozzarella slices from end to end.
- Sprinkle second layer of tomatoes with basil strips.
- Drizzle 1-2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar on the top piece of the baguette.
- Press the top of the baguette on top of the sandwich.
- Hold down the top as you slice through the sandwich to make pieces about 2 1/2 inches wide each or any size you choose.
- Move sandwich pieces to a serving platter and stick a toothpick through the center.
- Serve with potato chips and pickle spears.
- Enjoy!

Mediterranean Chicken Subwich

Ingredients

- One long whole wheat baguette or bread of your choice
- 3 grilled chicken breasts (buy them prepared at Whole Foods or your favorite grocery store or grill them in advance)
- One jar of sundried tomatoes in olive oil
- One can of artichoke hearts
- One container of reduced-fat feta cheese crumbles
- One package or bundle of arugula greens

Instructions

- On a flat surface, cutting board, or metal cookie sheet, use a bread knife to slice through the baguette longwise.
- Slice chicken breasts into 1/4-inch thick slices.
- Chop sundried tomatoes (these are oily, so I recommend using a paper towel or two to absorb some of the oil before trying to cut).
- Chop canned artichoke hearts.
- Lay a layer of chicken slices across the bottom of the baguette from end to end.
- Add sundried tomatoes and artichoke pieces on top of chicken.
- Add a few spoonfuls of feta crumbles to your liking on top of the tomatoes and artichokes.
- Top with arugula leaves.
- Drizzle some of the remaining sundried tomato-infused oil on the top part of the baguette before pressing it on top of the sandwich bottom and fillings.
- Hold down the top as you slice through the sandwich to make pieces about 2 1/2 inches wide each or any size you choose.
- Move sandwich pieces to a serving platter and stick a toothpick through the center.
- Serve with potato chips and pickle spears.

- Enjoy!