

A brunch or any meal featuring panini inspires interaction as each participant customizes their panino to their exact specifications. Spread the table with a variety of ingredients, a few suggestions for the unsure types and then step aside. We offer a dozen ideas for brunch panini that range from sweet to savory. We certain you'll devise a few of your own favorites to the list:

Brunch Panini:

Ricotta Cheese and Mango Panini

Choose a plain to sweet type of bread such as a basic French bread or a Cinnamon Swirl. Butter one side of each slice, (butter tastes better than olive oil in this scenario). Sweeten ricotta cheese with a bit of honey, syrup, or brown sugar – 1 tsp. to 1/4 cup cheese for one panino. Add a 1/8 tsp. vanilla, or a drop of almond extract, if desired. Spread the ricotta on the bottom slice leaving plenty of margin for the cheese to spread when pressed. Layer the ricotta with thin slices of ripe mango. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted. Substitute a peach for mango if desired.

Cream Cheese and Strawberry Panini

Choose a plain to sweet type of bread such as a French bread or plain ciabatta. Butter one side of each slice, (again, butter tastes better than olive oil in combination). Spread a thin layer of cream cheese on both the bottom and top slices of bread. Add a thin layer of your favorite (?homemade) strawberry jam to one slice. Add a layer of thinly sliced strawberries on top of the jam. Add the top slice of bread and grill 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

Bacon and Egg Panini:

Choose a hearty whole-grain bread. Scramble or fry one egg until cooked. Mist one side of each slice with olive oil. Place the egg on the bottom slice of bread. Layer very thinly sliced Canadian bacon and top with slices of mild Cheddar cheese. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

French Toast Panini:

Choose a plain to sweet type of bread such as a French bread or a Cinnamon Swirl. Butter one side of each slice. Sweeten ricotta cheese with maple syrup – 1 Tablespoon to 1/4 cup of ricotta cheese. Add a sprinkle of cinnamon and a slight grate of nutmeg. Spread the ricotta mixture on the bottom slice leaving plenty of room for the ricotta to spread. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

Apple Pie Panini:

Choose a plain to sweet type of bread such as a French bread or a Cinnamon Swirl. Butter one side of each slice. Sweeten 1 oz. of cream cheese with honey or brown sugar – 1 tsp. to 1 oz. cheese for one panino. Add a generous sprinkle of cinnamon and a slight grate of nutmeg to the ricotta mixture. Spread the cream cheese mixture on the bottom slice of bread. Layer thinly sliced apples on top of the cream cheese layer. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

S'more Panini:

Very little nutrition here, but plenty of decadence. Think of it as dessert. Choose a plain to sweet type of bread. Butter one side of each slice. Spread a layer of marshmallow cream on the bottom layer allowing plenty of margin for spreading. Top the marshmallow cream with a thin layer of chocolate bar, or a generous layer of chocolate shavings. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

Pear-Walnut Panini:

Choose a plain to a hearty whole-grain bread. Mist one side of each slice with olive oil. Layer the bottom slice with thin pieces of brie cheese. Press walnut pieces gently into the brie. Layer thin slices of a pear on top. Cover with the second slice of bread. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

Chicken Pesto Panini:

Choose a hearty whole-grain bread. Mist one side of each slice with olive oil. Layer the bottom slice with a smear of prepared pesto. Top with thin chunks of cooked chicken breast meat and slices of provolone cheese. Cover all with the second slice of bread. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted. Add a few whole, toasted pine nuts for extra fun.

Smoked Turkey, Avocado and Walnut Panini:

Choose a hearty whole-grain bread. Toast a few walnuts in the panini press as it heats up. Remove the walnuts from the press. Mist one side of each slice with olive oil. Layer the bottom slice a smear of whole-grain mustard. Layer your favorite smoked turkey deli meat, then thinly sliced avocado. Add the toasted walnuts. Top with slices of baby Swiss cheese. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

Ratatouille Panini:

Choose a hearty whole-grain bread. Rehydrate a few sun-dried tomatoes in some hot water, (skip this step if the tomatoes are oil-packed). Slice an eggplant into 3/8 inch slices. Sprinkle each eggplant slice lightly with salt and mist with olive oil. Grill the eggplant slices on the griddle. Remove and set aside. Drain the rehydrated tomatoes. Drain a couple red roasted peppers. Mist one side of each bread slice with olive oil. Smear one slice with a tablespoon of thick marinara sauce. Layer eggplant, then tomatoes, then red roasted peppers. Top with generous shavings of Parmesan cheese, then slices of mozzarella. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

French Onion Panini:

Choose a hearty country white or rye bread. Slice a medium onion into very thin rings. Sauté the onion in 1/2 tablespoon butter and 1/2 tablespoon olive oil. Allow the onions to slightly caramelize. Mist one side of each slice of bread with olive oil. Spread a portion of the caramelized onions on the bottom slice. Top with slices of Gruyere cheese. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.

Pork and Caper Panini:

Choose a rosemary-herbed foccacia, or a hearty whole-grain bread. Mist one side of each slice of bread with olive oil. Spread a healthy layer of stone-ground mustard on one slice. Sprinkle a tablespoon of capers over the mustard. Layer thin-slices of cooked pork tenderloin, (a great use of leftovers!), add a layer of arugula. Add a smear of mayonnaise to the top slice and assemble. Grill the panino 2-3 minutes in a panini press, or 2-3 minutes per side in a griddle skillet while weighted.