

Mushroom Portobello with Asiago Cheese Panini

Mushrooms have always been popular in Panini Recipes, but I've seen only a few using a sharp and strongly flavored cheese like Asiago.

When the weather is turning decidedly wintry, a warm, filling, and delicious panini recipe is just what the doctor ordered when you don't feel like cooking a complicated meal. The meatiness of portobello mushrooms, along with the aromatic flavor of rosemary, and the bite of asiago cheese is a perfect combination for the holiday season. Whether you're looking for a quick snack, or an easy to prepare meal after a day of work, you'll really enjoy this delicious and quickly prepared sandwich.

Makes three to four sandwiches:

1/2 lb of portobello mushrooms.

1/3 cup of olive oil.

1/2 clove garlic, minced.

2 1/2 tablespoons of lime juice (lemon also works).

1 teaspoon of fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1/2 teaspoon dried).

4 ciabatta bread, sliced in half, or any 8 slices of any dense bread.

1 1/2 teaspoons of salt.

1 teaspoon of pepper

6 teaspoons of pesto

7 ounces of asiago cheese, or cheese of your choice.

1 1/2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar. For a sweeter taste, pomegranate-infused vinegar also works.

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Preheat oven to 400F

Combine Oil, Vinegar, Lime juice, Salt, Pepper, Garlic, and Rosemary. Mix well

Gently slice washed mushrooms into 1/2 inch thick slices.

Pour oil and vinegar mixture over mushroom slices, and toss well. Allow to sit for 5 minutes or more. The longer you allow this to sit, the more flavorful the mushrooms will be.

Spread mushrooms in a single layer on a baking tray or sheet, sprinkle with more salt and pepper if desired. Roast for about 10 minutes, until the slices are soft but still whole.

Toast bread lightly, this step can be omitted if using a very dense bread such as ciabatta, but I still prefer it.

Turn on broiler and allow to heat.

Spread pesto over bread, about 1 1/2 teaspoons per roll.

Distribute mushroom mixture evenly on to half of the sliced bread, leaving the other half aside to place on top later.

Cover mushroom mixture with cheese, and place under broiler until cheese is melted.

Cover melted cheese with the tops of the sandwiches, and serve.

I'm a huge fan of having the right tools for the job. If you want to speed this process up, I would recommend using a panini press, or sandwich grill. Instead of having to bake everything, and then toast the bread, you can simply assemble the sandwich, and place it in your press. The bread will come out nicely toasted, while the heat from the press will melt the cheese and soften the mushrooms. This will cut cooking times drastically.