



## **PATTY MELT**

Behold the most comforting recipe in the book, a holy union of burger, cheese, and a hot skillet. Where the namesake Kronnerburger is restrained and contained, the patty melt is its messy opposite. It is the maximalist answer to the Kronnerburger's minimalism.

Traditionally, the patty melt is a simple griddled sandwich of sliced buttery rye bread, beef, caramelized onions, and a melted cheese of some sort, usually Swiss. As with many of the recipes in this book, this version takes those tenets and reconsiders each one. The onions are cooked in beef tallow to infuse extra flavor, and sharp cheddar is a more vibrant option than Swiss. A touch of rich béchamel lends creaminess, so Chinese hot mustard is essential to balance out the equation.

Be mindful of how thickly you slice your bread; as with standard burgers, you want an optimal bread-to-meat ratio, so keep the bread thickness roughly equivalent to the burger patty thickness—a little over a half-inch.

Patty melts are the best. Crunchy, chewy, spicy, and cheesy—all of the things at once. Long live the patty melt, an indulgent chunk of Americana that will thrust you back to an era of diners that have long since disappeared.

### **CARAMELIZED ONIONS**

5 tablespoons rendered beef tallow or unsalted butter  
1 white onion, thinly sliced  
Kosher salt

### **PATTY MELT**

1 pound freshly ground dry-aged, grass-fed beef  
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature  
8 slices levain (recipe below or store-bought)  
1/4 cup Chinese hot mustard  
3/4 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese  
2 tablespoons kosher salt  
1/4 cup béchamel (recipe below)

### **SERVES 4**

**To make the onions:** Melt the tallow or butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion, turn the heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, 30 to 45 minutes. Season with salt. Remove the onion from the pan and set aside until ready to serve.



**To make the patty melt:** Preheat the broiler.

Divide the beef into four 4-ounce balls, handling minimally. Put a sheet of plastic wrap over a 4-inch ring mold on a cutting board or other hard surface. Put a ball in the middle of the mold and gently press down with the palm of your hand, forming a patty that is 4 inches wide. Pop it out with the plastic wrap. Put the patties on a large dish or small baking sheet and refrigerate until ready to cook.

Using 4 tablespoons of the butter, butter one side of each of the levain slices and place, buttered side down, on a baking sheet. Spread the mustard on the unbuttered sides of four of the slices and top the other four slices with the cheese. Put the baking sheet under the broiler until the cheese melts and begins to get a touch of color, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from the broiler.

While the bread toasts, cook the patties. Heat a skillet over high heat. Salt both sides of each patty with 1/4 teaspoon salt and put them on the hot skillet. Cook until deeply browned on one side, about 2 minutes, then flip the patties and cook until they're a nice medium-rare, another minute or so.

Put a patty on a slice of bread with cheese and top with caramelized onions. Spread 1 tablespoon of béchamel on a mustard bread slice and cap the sandwich. Repeat with your other sandwiches.

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon butter in the same skillet over medium-high heat. Retoast the sandwiches in the skillet, one or two at a time, until crisp, about 1 1/2 minutes on each side. Keep warm while the others cook. Slice in half and eat immediately.

### *Pullman Loaf Levain*

Makes 1 loaf

3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups (516 grams) bread flour  
1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> cups (163 grams) durum flour  
3 tablespoons (22 grams) graham flour  
1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> cup (37 grams) rye flour  
2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cups (592 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) warm water  
1/2 cup (132 grams) sourdough leaven (page 225)  
1 tablespoon (18 grams) kosher salt  
Butter, for greasing

In a large bowl, mix the bread flour, durum flour, graham flour, and rye flour.



Pour the 2 1/2 cups (592 grams) water into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the hook attachment. Add the sourdough starter. The starter must float. If it doesn't float, wait until it does, or revive it by feeding it, or put it somewhere warm to activate it more quickly. Mix on low speed until combined. With the mixer still running, slowly add the flour mixture. When thoroughly combined, scrape down the sides of the bowl. Mix again for 2 minutes more, until the dough is well combined. It should be shaggy and sticky, wet but still with structure. Let sit for 30 minutes. (This step is called the autolyse.)

After 30 minutes, mix the dough on low speed for 4 minutes. The dough should feel fluffy and soft, not tight and dry. Once dough has reached that desired consistency, add the salt with the remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water. Mix on low speed until incorporated, then increase to the next highest speed and mix for 2 minutes. While the dough mixes, prepare a large, lightly greased bowl or dough tub. Transfer the dough from the mixer to the bowl. Cover with a cloth towel, and let rest for 2 hours, until the volume has increased by 30 percent.

During these 2 hours of the dough's rest/rise, gently turn the dough every 30 minutes—bring the dough on the bottom to the top, trying not to deflate the dough and losing too much of the air.

Once dough volume has increased by 30 percent after 2 hours, transfer from the bowl to a clean work surface, like a table or large cutting board. Let sit for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 500°F and grease your Pullman loaf pan with butter.

After the dough rests for 20 minutes, it's time to shape it. Making sure to handle the dough carefully and taking care not to expel the gases, gently form it into a rough rectangle. Working one at a time, grab each corner and drag it to the center of the dough; forming a loglike shape that will fit in the pan. Once all the corners are "connected" in the middle, flip the dough upside down into the pan, so the surface that was facing you is now facedown in the pan. Let proof at room temperature until the dough reaches the top of the pan. (If you're not baking right away, refrigerate for up to 12 hours; if your dough was refrigerated, let it sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before baking.)

Once the oven has reached temperature, put one or two oven-safe containers—cast-iron pans work great—one the bottom rack and fill with ice cubes or water. The goal here is to create a steamy environment in the oven to ensure a nice, crusty outer bread layer. Let steam for 10 minutes. Refill the water and at the same time, put in the bread and then lower the temperature to 475°F. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the bread has an internal temperature of 205°F. Remove from the oven and turn out of the pan. Let cool before eating.

Keep covered at room temperature for 2 to 3 days. It will keep frozen for up to 1 month.



### *Béchamel*

Makes about 1 Cup

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup heavy cream
- 1 bay leaf
- Dash of red wine vinegar
- 1 pinch of kosher salt
- 1 pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pinch of ground nutmeg

Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking continuously, until golden brown, 6 to 7 minutes. Whisk in the milk and cream and add the bay leaf. Keep whisking and cook until the béchamel boils and starts to thicken, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the vinegar, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Remove the bay leaf. Pour into a bowl to cool. Can be stored, covered and refrigerated, up to 3 days.

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