



ITALIAN PANINI ON SOURDOUGH



CHICKEN, BACON, PROVOLONE, AVOCADO SPREAD, JALAPEÑO, PLAIN MAYO ON A CROISSANT

WHICH SANDWICH?

BY DANNY FAIRCHILD

We take sandwiches for granted. And while Americans eat hundreds of millions of sandwiches a day, we even kind of look down on them. We say things like, “I’ll just have a sandwich.” Sure, you might find some sandwich offerings on a fancier restaurant menu, but they’re usually separated under their own heading from the more hoity-toity options. Sometimes they’re even separated on the menu from burgers, even though guess what a burger is? Want proof of how little we actually value sandwiches? Go up to someone who likes tacos (i.e. almost any human being on Tinder) and tell them that a taco is a sandwich. Bring friends in case it comes to blows. I’m not saying a taco is a sandwich, but the mere suggestion that a taco (a quintessential street food, by the way) could be lumped in with the lowly sandwich is nearly enough to unmake friendships. We treat sandwiches the way people are treated in abusive relationships and in most religions, and yet they’re always there for us. Sack lunches, blood drives, vending machines, comfort food, the very definition of a quick bite, a great way to get rid of leftovers, and our go-to when we can’t make up our mind what to eat. And I’m willing to bet, if you were honest with yourself, if you made a list of the best dishes you’ve ever had...including any fine dining experience...at least one sandwich would crack the top five.

There’s a lot of love there, too. There’s love in the ritual of making a sandwich. There’s love in packing them for road trips and picnics. There’s love in cutting off the crusts for your kid. There’s love in pairing it with soup. There’s love in your decision to cut it straight across or corner-to-corner. There’s love in saving half of it for later.

It’s time we gave sandwiches the respect they deserve.

Enter Which Sandwich?. I hope I punctuated that sentence correctly.

Which Sandwich? has pastrami. I’m just going to mention that right off the bat because I don’t think many, if any, sandwich shops around here offer pastrami. For those who don’t know, pastrami is (usually) beef that has run the gauntlet. It’s been brined, dried, seasoned, smoked, and steamed to deliciousness. Though a deli staple, you don’t see it around here much. If anything,

we’re corned beef people. But if you feel like you’re in a rut making your pickle rollups with ham or corned beef, pastrami is a wonderful way to deli things up.

Which Sandwich? is located in the Millwork District, and if cool things keep popping up there, I’m going to be in great danger of spending virtually all my free time there. The main entrance is on 10th Street, with a more accessible entrance through the salon next door. Yeah, I know it’s a bit weird, but that’s the Millwork District for you. Which Sandwich? and the salon are separate enough that it’s a bit weird, but it ain’t gross. Which Sandwich? is only open for lunch, so you don’t have to worry about accessibility to this sandwich shop during salon after hours. There’s accessibility whenever Which Sandwich? is open.

Which Sandwich? is very much a grab-your-food-and-go situation, with no sit down seating. As such, there’s no devoted bathroom for me to give you the lowdown, as is my wont. I imagine there’s one in the salon if you really have to go, but you’re going to be in and out in a matter of minutes.

The food. Here in Dubuque, we have more than enough options for hoagie or hero or sub or po’ boy or whatever you call a sandwich on a kind of roll. We don’t have a ton of options for a really good sliced bread sammich and I’m happy this has changed. I love a good sub, but there’s something so homey and satisfying about a sliced bread sandwich. It makes me feel like I’m eating a sammich from a real New York deli. I wouldn’t say it’s exactly like eating at a New York deli. First of all, I’ve never done that. Second of all, I’ve seen how obscenely and inconveniently high they stack the meat at those places, and we don’t do that crap around here. There’s a good portion of meat, rest assured, but I ask you: What good is it if you can’t even get your mouth around it? Yes, I’m still talking about sandwiches. Perv.

Your options. Again, we have tons of sandwich places that has a menu of pre-designed sandwich options. My theory is that such sandwich shops don’t trust you to order something good, so they present you with a menu of sandwiches, and not a menu of things you can get on your sandwich. Which Sandwich? does have

some pre-ordained sandwiches on their panini menu. You got your “Veggie” with spinach, tomato, avocado spread, and mayo. You got your “Pesto Cheese” with cheddar, jack, and pesto. You got your “Italian” with pepperoni, salami, ham, provolone, banana peppers, and Italian dressing. But really, Which Sandwich? trusts you enough to make your own sandwich decisions. Which makes the sandwich options unlimited. You get to choose your bread, your meat, and your toppings.

Bread: You’re looking at white, wheat, sourdough (you read that right) or for an additional fee you can get a croissant or gluten free.

Meat: You’re looking at turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef, salami, pepperoni, the aforementioned pastrami, and bacon.

Cheese: You’re looking at Swiss, American, cheddar, provolone, pepper jack, or feta.

Toppings: Lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, onions, banana peppers, green peppers, black olives, cukes, jalapeños, spinach, and avocado spread. Then you got your mustards and dressings, and mayo. Oh! They have different flavors of mayo (I ain’t calling it aioli). We’re talking ranch, French, BBQ, chipotle, and pesto.

With all these options, you might be afraid you will fail. I’m not saying it’s not a possibility. I don’t know your life. But MY first time at Which Sandwich? I was a little careless and still came out just fine. For starters, I just had to get in on that pastrami. And they have sourdough, so I had to try the sourdough. Then I got a little thoughtless. I just ordered stuff I liked all willy-nilly. I didn’t do too bad with the pastrami and turkey with provolone, avocado spread, and pesto mayo. It wasn’t one of my top sandwiches, but it was a good sandwich, for all its faults.

Then something weird happened. I started to get a little more scientific with it. I started doing some chemistry experiments in the form of sandwiches from Which Sandwich?. I even consulted one of my favorite books of all time, *The Flavor Bible* by Karen Page (ISBN-13: 978-0316118408), trying to come up with some good sandwiches. I succeeded.

So! If you’re the kind of person who doesn’t trust yourself to build a better sandwich, I submit to you these



sandwiches designed for you by me, Danny Fairchild. I wouldn't presume to tell you what kind of bread to order, but this is what you should get on it:

1. Ham, pepper jack, mustard, spinach, your choice of mayo.
2. Chicken, feta, lettuce, pesto mayo.
3. Chicken, bacon, provolone, avocado spread, jalapeño, plain mayo.
4. Pastrami, pepperoni, pepper jack, tomatoes, Dijon mustard, vinegar, oil

My favorite of these? No. 3. The chicken isn't the kind of cold cut chicken that you can barely distinguish from turkey. We're talking a thick chunk of chicken breast here. The bacon adds some saltiness and the jalapeños add kind of a pickled spiciness to it, but not too much. Just a little heat. Not even enough to clean sinuses. I got this on a croissant and I must say that this...THIS...was one of the best sandwiches I've had in a long, long, time.

What's that? Oh! You've got even BETTER ideas for sandwiches? What do you want, a cookie? Seriously, do you want a cookie? Because each sandwich comes with a cookie. So you're going to get a cookie. Options include chocolate chip, peanut butter squares, and oatmeal raisin. Oh, grow up! Oatmeal

raisin cookies are delightful! I haven't tried them at Which Sandwich? yet, though, because I knew you would be more interested in the other two. And you should be interested in them. I LOVE the peanut butter squares.

Soup! They always have chili and an additional soup of the day to warm your bones on the coming cold days. I had the roasted red pepper bisque because if you put the word "bisque" in anything I'll probably order it. And it was wonderful. Creamy and savory and yum.

Ice cream! They've got about eight hand-dip style ice cream choices for your sweet tooth.

And, of course being somewhat reminiscent of a deli, you've got bags of chips, candy bars, and bottled drinks.

They pack a whoooooole lot into a little space, Imma tell you that right now.

And discounts! If you work down in the Millwork district, you get 5 percent off. If you're a first responder (police, fire, EMT and the like) you get a 10 percent discount as a thank-you for all you do!

So! I'm a big fan of Which Sandwich?. Since it's only open for lunch, it isn't going to be your quick bite while you're hitting the other cool places in the Millwork, but you definitely won't regret using your lunch break on it. ☒

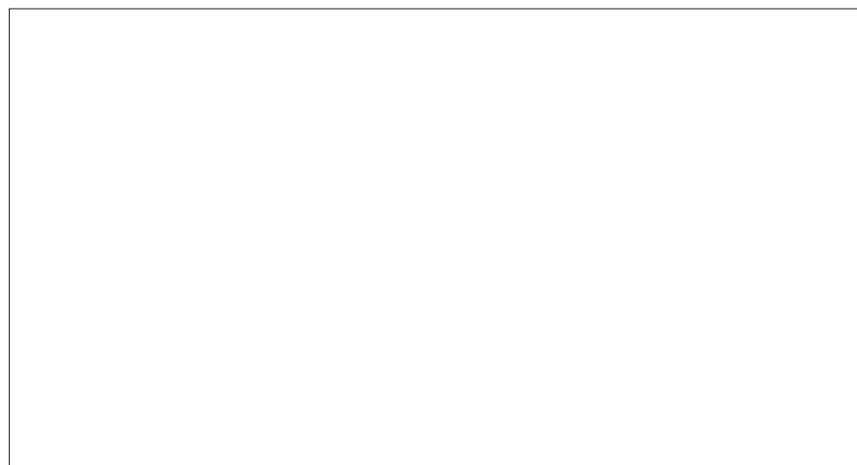
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