

Better-For-You Grilled Cheese Sandwich



This grilled cheese checks off many comfort-food boxes—toasted bread and melty cheese to name two—with a strategic shift to more vegetables than cheese. Rings of roasted squash give the sandwich substance. Stirring together Gruyère with either a dairy or plant-based ricotta binds the sandwich together, keeping the saturated fat profile tipped toward brain health. If you use cashew ricotta and skip the Gruyère, you'll have an entirely plant-based dinner.

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 small winter squash (butternut, kabocha, or delicata) (1 pound/455 g), sliced ½ inch (1.25 cm) thick (see Tip)
1 medium yellow onion (about 10 ounces/285 g), thinly sliced
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more if needed
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup (200 g) Lemony Cashew Ricotta (page 373) or store-bought ricotta
1 cup (4 ounces/115 g) grated Gruyère cheese
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
8 slices whole-grain bread
One 15-ounce (425 g) can artichoke hearts, packed in water, drained and quartered

Instructions

Set an oven rack in the center position and preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Toss the squash, onion, 1 tablespoon of the oil, and ¼ teaspoon of the salt on the prepared baking sheet, making sure both sides of the squash pieces are well coated. Bake for 20 to 24 minutes, until the squash is tender and the onions are golden brown. Slip off and discard the squash skin, if you like (see Tip).

Reduce the oven temperature to 300°F (150°C). Place the vegetables back in the oven to keep warm.

BRAIN HEALTH KITCHEN by Annie Fenn, M.D.

Combine the ricotta, Gruyère, and pepper in a small bowl. Spread the mixture on one side of each piece of bread, dividing evenly, then top four of the bread slices with the squash and onions, followed by the artichokes. Cover with the remaining four slices of bread and press gently so everything sticks together.

Warm the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add two sandwiches to the pan and cook until the bread is toasty brown and the cheese is soft, 4 to 6 minutes on each side. Transfer to the pan in the oven to keep warm while you make the remaining sandwiches, adding a drizzle more oil, if needed. Serve warm.

Tip: All squash skin is edible (and a good source of fiber and vitamins A, C, and E), but some are tastier than others. Delicata, red kuri, and kabocha squashes are good choices to enjoy with the peel on. Others, like acorn and butternut squash, have a tougher, more fibrous skin that you may want to discard. It's easier to slip off the skins after roasting.