



Kimchi Grilled Cheese 김치그릴치즈

Serves 1

Total Time 30 minutes

Sarah 세라

Thanksgiving has always meant a trip to Costco with Umma to purchase their premade holiday foods. Of these, one staple we never skip is their macaroni and cheese. It's creamy, cheesy, and comforting—a perfect complement to our annual Thanksgiving meal. Despite our love for this dish, my family never quite manages to finish it all on Thanksgiving Day. Of course, as with many other leftovers, Umma has found a way to bring the macaroni and cheese back to life after the holiday by pairing it with kimchi. The spicy kick of the kimchi elevates the creamy richness of the mac and cheese to a whole new level. It's now a ritual in our household to enjoy them together after every Thanksgiving—a fusion of comfort food and Korean flavors that we cannot get enough of. Inspired by this family tradition and its delicious blend of traditional American and Korean foods, Umma and I endeavored to create a kimchi grilled cheese sandwich that celebrates this pairing. Our recipe brings together the rich and gooey goodness of melted Muenster cheese with the spicy, tangy flavors of kimchi, sandwiching them between buttery griddled sourdough bread slices. For even more depth, we include a layer of chopped green onion, along with a blend of seasonings.

Umma's Kitchen Wisdom

A sturdy bread, such as sourdough, is ideal here to prevent the sandwich from becoming soggy. I use well-fermented Mat Kimchi (Cut Napa Cabbage Kimchi) to make this dish. If you wish to use store-bought kimchi instead, look for a well-fermented kimchi in the refrigerated section of the grocery store. Labels will not always specify “fresh” or

“well-fermented,” so here are some clues to help figure it out: The jar should contain wilted-looking vegetables with muted, darkened color, surrounded by a thin juice. The texture will appear softer than fresh kimchi, and when you taste it, there will be a pronounced tangy sourness that comes from the longer fermentation. When measuring out the kimchi, simply pick it up with tongs with the juices intact.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons salted butter, divided
½ cup (100 grams) well-fermented cabbage kimchi, chopped fine
2 teaspoons sugar, plus extra for sprinkling
½ teaspoon fish sauce
½ teaspoon gochugaru
¼ teaspoon Dasida beef stock powder
2 (½ -inch-thick) slices sourdough bread
3 slices (61 grams) Muenster cheese, halved
½ teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon onion powder
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 green onions, chopped fine

Directions

1. Melt ½ tablespoon butter in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the kimchi and cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through and it begins to sizzle. Stir in the sugar, fish sauce, gochugaru, and Dasida powder and cook until the liquid has just evaporated, about 1 minute. (Don't let the kimchi dry out.) Transfer the seasoned kimchi to a small plate and set aside. Wipe the skillet clean with paper towels.
2. Melt half of the remaining butter in the skillet over medium--high heat. Add the bread slices and swirl them around the skillet to coat them in butter on the first side; transfer the bread to a separate plate. Repeat melting the remaining butter and coating the second sides of the bread slices. Continue to toast the bread on the second sides until just golden brown and crisp, about 1 minute.
3. Reduce the heat to low and flip the bread slices. Arrange the cheese evenly on top of the bread slices, then sprinkle with the garlic powder, onion powder, and pepper. Sprinkle 1 slice of the bread with the onions, then neatly arrange the seasoned -kimchi on top. Place the second slice of bread over the kimchi, cheese side down. Using a spatula, gently press down on the sandwich to help seal it. Cover and cook until the cheese is fully melted, about 2 minutes, flipping the sandwich halfway through cooking. Transfer the sandwich to a wire rack and sprinkle with sugar on both sides to taste. Garnish the sandwich with any green onions that fell out into the skillet. Slice and serve.

Recipe Courtesy Sarah Ahn & America's Test Kitchen -2025