

# TOASTIE of the town

CheeseFest +  
Rymill Park, Octo



A cheese toastie is one of the great food packages – as CheeseFest stars explain, writes **Simon Wilkinson**

What could be better than a slice of wonderful cheese, whether it is a bitey cheddar, creamy goat curd or maybe ripe, funky brie? The answer is putting that cheese between two slices of butter-coated bread and toasting until the outside is golden and sizzling and the inside has transformed to a delicious, melty ooze.



Next month sees the return of CheeseFest, the celebration of all things cheese and other fermented goodies. As part of the event, founder Kris Lloyd and team have created a quartet of toasties that will be on sale over the weekend, based on a public vote (see panel, right).

But you don't need to wait until then. We've gone to some of the experts taking part in CheeseFest to ask for their favourite fillings and other toastie tips. As well as Kris,

contributors are: Matt Preston (Master of Fromage), Karena Armstrong (The Salopian Inn), Sharon Flynn (The Fermentary), Simon Bryant (chef, author, Tasting Australia director), Jessie Spiby (My Grandma Ben), Lachlan Cameron (King's Head Hotel) and Duy Huynh (photographer).

### What do you love about a toastie?

**MP** The ideal toastie is all the food groups in a tasty, hot and easy to make hand-held package.

**KA** It's that combination of soft bread, salty butter that has crisped up the outside of the bread and gooey cheese. Let's face it, I have generally been partaking of a few drinks when I think a toastie is a good idea.

You need to have a fridge bursting with all the good condiments to make it truly easy. Every type of mustard, chilli sauce, good anchovies, truffle paste, pesto ... it can be glorious. **SB** It's simple and proves that you don't need to be a super chef to make a great meal. **SF** Comforting, easy, delicious, greasy and cheesy. Then, if you're lucky enough, you combine the cheesy heaven with the cut through of a great ferment ... such a joy for the tastebuds. **DH** What I love is the simple joy of hot toasted bread and oozing cheese. There's very few things like it. It probably comes down to the way the cheese melts and stretches in the mouth. **KL** It reminds me of my kids and my younger years! **LC** Great hangover food. **JS** The toastie is a childhood favourite that is perfectly acceptable to enjoy as an adult. Toasted buttery bread filled with cheese ... seriously, what's not to love?

### What are your toastie secrets?

**MP** Don't rush a toastie. Take your time to cook it and take your time before eating it.

Once you've started eating, give the toastie all your attention. And think about the perfect accompaniment to your toastie – a mango or brinjal chutney? Baby cos leaves dressed in lemon juice? Fresh grapes or string-free celery? The smallest ripe tomatoes you can find? A sprinkling of coriander and a few stripes of kewpie mayo and brown sauce? That dram of whisky! **JS** "When ya looking' you ain't cooking" – put that bad boy in the machine and let it cook away without being tempted to look at its progress! You'll get a nice caramelised crust. **KA** I'm a massive fan of rocket or salad greens dressed with lemon and olive oil put in the toastie after it has been cooked. **KL** It's all about the butter. You cannot do "toastie" justice without lashings of it and I prefer it to be cultured and salted – strictly no marg.

### What bread do you like to use?

**MP** In my experience as an unbeaten competitive toastie maker, most toasties are best with sh\*tty white bread. Never use an artisan sourdough, the cheese pours out of the holes when it melts. I have also made toasties from naan, roti, tortillas, piadinas (fontina, taleggio) and, most recently, even taught how to make one using an El Salvadorian papusa recipe! There is a special joy about making a toastie when you cook dough at the same time as the cheese melts inside. **KA** Thick cut white bread from a good bakery. A high top loaf gives the best ingredient surface area. **SF** Chewy, long fermented white sourdough. **LC** Cheap and white! **JS** At My Grandma Ben we use The Lost Loaf's sourdough ... and my god, does it make a great toastie!

### Butter on the outside?

**MP** Yes, no, maybe ... Nude is cool but there are sooooo many things you can do to lift your toastie as you'll find out at Cheese Fest. It's not just what's "IN" the toastie that matters – think about what you can do with the outside. **KA** Without question and lashings of it – B.d. Farm Paris Creek is the best. **JS** Yes, however I like to add it about half way through along with ...salt and sometimes parmesan to get a cheesy crust. **SF** Of course! Lashings of cultured butter is a must. **SB** I know it's not strictly a toastie but I like to olive oil one side and grill, then put cheese on the other side and grill again and serve as an open sandwich ... one side toast, one side soft bread and burnt cheese.

### Frying pan or toastie machine?

**MP** The sandwich press is fine for drier fillings but the jaffle maker is ideal for sealing in wetter stuff like eggs and beans.

I have a big family so we tend to have the press and the fourslot toastie maker going at the same time.

When desperate, I've also used a toaster a few times but this is not recommended or endorsed by me! **KA** In the pan for sure, combination of oil and butter in the pan plus butter on the outside of the bread ... it's not a health food. **DH** Generally toastie machine for the instant gratification, but if you really want a treat, nothing beats the frying pan. **KL** I grew up with the toastie maker with the little patterns on each half. It was great if you had runnier ingredients as it would enclose the deliciousness inside each half and would cut the toastie in two.

### What is your favourite toastie cheese/ cheeses and why?

**MP** Study the science of the melt. Acid-set cheeses don't melt as evenly as rennet-set cheeses. High and low acid cheese both won't melt for different reasons. For best results, any cheese with a pH level between 5.1 and 5.7 is ideal — 5.0 to 5.4 is seen as the ultimate sweet spot for melting!

Gruyere, manchego, aged gouda and swiss are all go-to-melters and have the required bold flavour. If you are in a rush, grate cheese for a faster melt, or use a wetter cheese like mozzarella or brie that melts at 55C compared with the 65C needed to melt cheddar. **SF** It's so hard to pick a favourite, particularly in Adelaide – you have some brilliant cheesemakers. I love Paris Creek's cheeses, their vintage cheddar and the Norwegino, it is so good with krauts. Udder Delights Chèvre and Kris Lloyd's Buffalo Feta. The list could go on and on ... **DH** My all-time favourite cheese for toasties would be cheddar. It's easy to find, and just oozes and stretches in a way very

few other cheeses can. **KL** Cheddar with flavour because the sharp bite adds complexity and is not just the vehicle that binds the other ingredients **SB** English west country cheddar cause it has kick, stilton because it is so complex and perhaps brie because the white mould stays sort of intact and the middle just turns to lava. Also raclette cause it's just the champion of melting into a gooey mess. **JS** A decadent toastie requires a sharp hard cheese such as an aged gouda, pecorino or manchego, and something for goo like a vintage cheddar. I think sharp salty cheeses work best.

### **Is there anything that shouldn't be put in a toastie?**

**MP** Offal, peanut butter, Nutella, any Japanese automobile no matter how small. **KA** According to my three boys no ... they have some truly wack combos. I think pineapple should never be in a toastie. **SF** Definitely salad. **DH** Maybe ice cream. **KL** Lettuce. **SB** That stuff that they call cheese but isn't. If it's not cultured, it's just not cheese. **LC** Lettuce. **JS** Dessert toasties aren't my bag – the idea of Nutella and marshmallows is fairly off-putting!