

— AMERICA'S —  
**TEST KITCHEN**

# Diner-Style Patty Melts

**SERVES** Serves 4 sandwiches

**TIME** 1¼ hours

## Why This Recipe Works

On the *Cook's Country* TV show, Ashley and Julia make two sandwiches. This recipe serves four but can be halved as they have done (note that you'll need to cut all ingredients in half and decrease the cooking times for the onions). These patty melts boast juicy beef, jammy onions, perfectly melted cheese, and buttery griddled rye bread that's exquisitely crisp. To get there, we started with lightly toasted bread, making it sturdier and less susceptible to getting soggy, ensuring that it crisped nicely in the pan. Pressing out thin beef patties a bit larger than the slices of toast made for quick-cooking burgers with loads of flavorful crust and a consistent amount of juicy beef in every bite. Transferring the seared patties directly to the cheese (American for creamy melting, Swiss for nutty flavor) jump-started the melting process. Further, it protected the toast from getting soggy with beef juices. Finally, cooking the sliced onions covered with a bit of water (and the flavorful fond left from searing the beef patties) and then uncovered with additions of ketchup, brown sugar, and Worcestershire sauce created a quick caramelized, sweet-savory onion jam that took these patty melts to the next level.



## Gather Your Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1½ teaspoons pepper, divided
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons packed brown sugar

## Before You Begin

- \* We developed this recipe using Pepperidge Farm Jewish Rye Bread. For the best flavor, buy American cheese from the deli counter, not cellophane-wrapped cheese slices. It's helpful to weigh the cheese to account for differences in thickness of deli slices. This recipe can be halved (note that you'll need to decrease the cooking times for the onions). *It's unnecessary to temp the burgers because they will reach a food-safe temperature if cooked according to the recipe instructions. (But for more information on food safety, check out this guide.)*

## Instructions

- 2** teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 8** slices seeded rye bread, lightly toasted, divided
- 8** slices deli Swiss cheese (6 ounces), divided
- 4** slices deli American cheese (3 ounces)
- 1** pound 80 percent lean ground beef
- 6** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into six 1-tablespoon pieces, divided
- 2** onions, sliced thin (3 cups)

- 1.** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet; place in oven. Combine  $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper in small bowl; set aside. Combine  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water, ketchup, vinegar, sugar, and Worcestershire sauce in second small bowl; set aside.
- 2.** Lay 4 slices rye toast in single layer on clean counter. Shingle 1 slice Swiss cheese and 1 slice American cheese on toast (breaking up cheese slices as necessary to keep from hanging over edges of toast). Divide beef into 4 equal portions and, working on flat surface, use your hands to press each portion into very thin oval patty (no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick) about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch larger than slices of rye toast.
- 3.** Heat 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Sprinkle tops of patties with half of salt mixture. Swirl 1 tablespoon butter into hot skillet until melted. Using 2 hands, carefully pick up 2 patties and add to skillet seasoned side down. Sprinkle tops with half of remaining salt mixture. Cook until well browned on both sides, 60 to 90 seconds per side. Transfer patties to 2 cheese-topped slices of toast. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in now-empty skillet. Add remaining 2 patties, seasoned side down, and repeat cooking process, sprinkling with remaining salt mixture.
- 4.** Add onions, 1 cup water, remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, and remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper to now-empty skillet and stir to scrape up any browned bits. Cover and cook over medium-high heat until water has evaporated and onions are sizzling, 8 to 10 minutes.
- 5.** Uncover and continue to cook, stirring often, until onions are softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in ketchup mixture and cook until liquid has evaporated and onions are uniformly browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Off heat, divide onions evenly over patties and immediately top with remaining 4 slices Swiss cheese and remaining 4 slices toast. Rinse out skillet, scraping up any stuck-on bits, and wipe clean with paper towels.
- 6.** Melt 1 tablespoon butter in now-empty skillet over medium heat, swirling to coat skillet. Transfer 2 patty melts to skillet. Cover and cook until bottoms are golden brown and crisp, 3 to 5 minutes, moving sandwiches occasionally to ensure even browning.
- 7.** Using spatula, carefully flip sandwiches. Add 1 tablespoon butter to center of skillet between sandwiches and tilt to distribute butter as it melts. Cover and cook until golden brown and crisp, about 3 minutes, reducing heat to medium-low if toast begins to turn deep brown or browns unevenly. Transfer to wire rack in oven.
- 8.** Repeat with remaining 2 tablespoons butter and remaining 2 patty melts. Slice sandwiches in half and serve.