

Slow Cooker Cuban Sandwiches: Tender Pork, Melty Cheese & Crispy Bread

Slow Cooker Cuban Sandwiches: Tender Pork, Melty Cheese, and Crispy Perfection!



TIME
3-5 min

METHOD
Slow cooker

PRINT
Recipe Card

SAVE
PDF

INGREDIENTS

4-5 lbs. pork shoulder or butt roast
Juice from 2 oranges (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
Juice from 2 limes (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 Tbsp. cumin (ground)
1 Tbsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. cayenne pepper (adjust to taste)
1 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. black pepper
2 Cuban bread loaves or Italian bread loaves
(sturdy, crusty bread is key)
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, softened (for
grilling/pressing)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sliced Swiss cheese
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sliced deli ham
12 sandwich pickles, sliced lengthwise (dill
pickles recommended)
Yellow mustard

Swaps and Notes:

Pork Shoulder/Butt Roast: This cut is ideal for slow cooking due to its marbling and connective tissue, which breaks down into incredibly tender meat.

Citrus Juices: Freshly squeezed orange and lime juices provide authentic Cuban flavor and tenderize the pork.

Spices: Cumin, dried oregano, and cayenne pepper are essential for the Cuban pork's flavor profile. Adjust cayenne for heat preference.

Cuban Bread: Traditional Cuban bread is long and crusty with a soft interior. If unavailable, a crusty Italian loaf or French bread is a good substitute.

Swiss Cheese: Adds a classic tangy, nutty flavor and a great melt.

Deli Ham: Thinly sliced deli ham works well. Consider a good quality ham for best flavor.

Pickles: Dill sandwich pickles, sliced lengthwise, are essential for that tangy crunch.

Yellow Mustard: Provides a classic sharp, tangy counterpoint to the rich meats and cheese.

Panini Press/Skillet: A panini press makes uniform grilled sandwiches easy. A cast iron skillet with a heavy weight (like another skillet or foil-wrapped brick) works perfectly for pressing.

Instructions:

For the Pork:

Prepare Marinade: In a medium bowl, combine the orange juice, lime juice, minced garlic, ground cumin, dried oregano, cayenne pepper, kosher salt, and black pepper. Whisk well until thoroughly combined.

Marinate & Cook Pork: Place the pork shoulder or butt roast in your slow cooker. The fat side should be facing up, as the fat will render down and baste the meat. Pour the prepared marinade over the pork, ensuring it is well coated.

Slow Cook: Cover the slow cooker with its lid. Cook on low heat for 8-10 hours, or until the pork is incredibly tender and easily shreds with a fork. Cooking time may vary slightly depending on your slow cooker model and the size/cut of your pork.

Shred Pork: Once cooked, carefully remove the pork from the slow cooker to a cutting board. Discard any excess large pieces of fat. If your pork has bones, remove and discard them. Shred the pork thoroughly using two forks. Return the shredded pork to the slow cooker and stir it into the flavorful cooking juices. This allows the pork to soak up even more flavor and remain moist. Set aside until ready to assemble the sandwiches.

For the Cubans (Assembly and Pressing):

Preheat Press/Skillet: If using a panini press, preheat it to medium heat. If using a cast iron skillet, place it over medium heat to warm up.

Prepare Bread: Trim the ends off of each Cuban bread loaf (or Italian bread) and cut the loaves in half horizontally to create top and bottom halves for sandwiches.

Butter & Mustard Bread: Spread a thin layer of the softened unsalted butter on the outside of each

slice of bread (the part that will be grilled/pressed). On the inside of the bread, spread a generous amount of yellow mustard.

DIRECTIONS

1. Making : Slow Cooker Cuban Sandwiches is a two-part process: slow-cooking the flavorful pork, then assembling and pressing the sandwiches!
2. For the Pork:: Prepare Marinade: In a medium bowl, combine the orange juice, lime juice, minced garlic, ground cumin, dried oregano, cayenne pepper, kosher salt, and black pepper. Whisk well until thoroughly combined.
3. Marinate & : Cook Pork: Place the pork shoulder or butt roast in your slow cooker. The fat side should be facing up, as the fat will render down and baste the meat. Pour the prepared marinade over the pork, ensuring it is well coated.
4. Slow : Cook: Cover the slow cooker with its lid. Cook on low heat for 8-10 hours, or until the pork is incredibly tender and easily shreds with a fork. Cooking time may vary slightly depending on your slow cooker model and the size/cut of your pork.
5. Shred : Pork: Once cooked, carefully remove the pork from the slow cooker to a cutting board. Discard any excess large pieces of fat. If your pork has bones, remove and discard them. Shred the pork thoroughly using two forks. Return the shredded pork to the slow cooker and stir it into the flavorful cooking juices. This allows the pork to soak up even more flavor and remain moist. Set aside until ready to assemble the sandwiches.
6. For the Cubans (Assembly and Pressing):: Preheat Press/Skillet: If using a panini press, preheat it to medium heat. If using a cast iron skillet, place it over medium heat to warm up.

7. **Prepare : Bread:** Trim the ends off of each Cuban bread loaf (or Italian bread) and cut the loaves in half horizontally to create top and bottom halves for sandwiches.
8. **Butter & : Mustard Bread:** Spread a thin layer of the softened unsalted butter on the outside of each slice of bread (the part that will be grilled/pressed). On the inside of the bread, spread a generous amount of yellow mustard.
9. **Layer the : Sandwiches:** On the bottom halves of the buttered and mustard-spread bread, layer the ingredients in this order: Sliced Swiss cheese (about 2 slices per sandwich)
10. Sliced deli ham (a good portion)
11. A generous amount of the shredded pork (from the slow cooker)
12. Several slices of sandwich pickles (sliced lengthwise)
13. Another layer of sliced : Swiss cheese (about 1-2 slices)
14. Finally, place the top half of the bread on the sandwiches. Repeat until all the sandwiches have been assembled.
15. **Press & : Grill Sandwiches:** If using a panini press: Place the assembled sandwiches in the preheated panini press and close the lid. Grill for 3-5 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown and crispy, and the cheese is beautifully melted and gooey. Repeat with the remaining sandwiches.
16. If using a cast iron skillet: Place one sandwich into the preheated skillet. Use another heavy skillet or a foil-wrapped brick to press down firmly on the sandwich. Cook for 2-3 minutes on each side, pressing down firmly, until the bread is golden brown and crispy and the cheese has melted. Repeat with the remaining sandwiches.
17. **Serve:** Slice the pressed sandwiches in half (diagonally is classic for Cubans!) and serve immediately. Enjoy with a side of chips or a fresh salad and additional pickles.
18. **Tips for Success: Sear Pork (Optional but Recommended):** For deeper flavor, consider quickly searing the pork shoulder on all sides in a hot skillet before placing it in the slow cooker.
19. **Don't : Drain Pork Juices:** After shredding, return the pork to the slow cooker juices. This keeps it incredibly moist and flavorful.
20. **Press : Firmly:** Whether using a panini press or a skillet, pressing the sandwich down is key to getting that classic flat, crispy, and melty Cuban sandwich.
21. **Butter the : Outside:** Spreading butter on the outside of the bread ensures a golden, crispy crust.
22. **Warm : Bread First (Optional):** Lightly toasting the bread before assembling can help prevent sogginess from the fillings.
23. **Adjust : Pork Seasoning:** Taste the cooked pork and adjust salt/pepper/spices if needed before assembling the sandwiches.
24. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** These Slow Cooker Cuban Sandwiches are a hearty and satisfying meal on

their own! They are perfect for:

- 25. Casual : Dinners: A fun and flavorful family meal.

SWAPS & NOTES

Pork Shoulder/Butt Roast: This cut is ideal for slow cooking due to its marbling and connective tissue, which breaks down into incredibly tender meat.

Citrus Juices: Freshly squeezed orange and lime juices provide authentic Cuban flavor and tenderize the pork.

Spices: Cumin, dried oregano, and cayenne pepper are essential for the Cuban pork's flavor profile.

Cuban Bread: Traditional Cuban bread is long and crusty with a soft interior.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Sear Pork (Optional but Recommended): For deeper flavor, consider quickly searing the pork shoulder on all sides in a hot skillet before placing it in the slow cooker.

Don't Drain Pork Juices: After shredding, return the pork to the slow cooker juices.

This keeps it incredibly moist and flavorful.

Press Firmly: Whether using a panini press or a skillet, pressing the sandwich down is key to getting that classic flat, crispy, and melty Cuban sandwich.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/slow-cooker-cuban-sandwiches-tender-pork-melty-cheese-crispy-bread/>