

Garlic Bread Salmon Bánh Mì

BY KEN TRAN | @FEEDTHEPUDGE

I was challenged me to create a dish that celebrates both my Vietnamese culture and my American upbringing. After several rounds of testing, I landed on a recipe that really feels like me on a plate: I'd like to introduce you to my Garlic Bread Salmon Bánh Mì.

It has everything you know and love about a classic bánh mì: the crusty, airy Vietnamese baguette, the bright pickled veggies, and a generous (some might say excessive) amount of cilantro. But instead of the usual banh mi proteins, I paired it with wild-caught sockeye salmon, a fish that represents my Seattle and PNW roots. To take it over the top, I turned the Vietnamese baguette into garlic bread with a rich garlic-parsley butter. Then, to really bring it all home, I drizzle the sandwich with garlic Maggi aioli. You might find similar aiolis next to a basket of fries or paired with crab cakes, but when blended with Maggi seasoning, it becomes a sauce that captures the flavors I grew up with.

Working on this project has been especially meaningful for me because I struggled with being a first-generation immigrant. Never feeling like I belonged. My parents encouraged me to keep my head down, work hard, and try my best to fit in. Along the way, I ended up pushing my Vietnamese culture aside and felt too ashamed to embrace it, just doing what I could to be American.

As I've grown into the man that I am today and started creating content around Vietnamese food and culture, I've reclaimed so much pride in where I come from. I've connected with so many people all across the country who have had similar upbringings, and sharing those experiences together has been incredibly powerful. This Garlic Bread Salmon Bánh Mì is a reflection of who I am as an Asian+American and proves that I never needed to choose between these two sides of myself, because all of it makes me, me. I'm so excited to share this recipe with you and can't wait to see how you make it your own.

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SERVES: 3-4

INGREDIENTS

Salmon

1 lb wild-caught cockeye salmon fillet
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp garlic powder
⅛ tsp MSG
⅛ tsp white pepper
1 tbsp oil

Quick Pickled Veggies / Đô Chua

1 carrot
1 daikon
¼ cup water
¼ cup sugar
¼ cup white vinegar

Garlic Butter

3 tbsp softened butter
1 tbsp minced garlic
½ tbsp dried parsley

Accompaniments

Vietnamese Baguettes
Cilantro
Cucumbers
Jalapeno
Butter

Recipe continue...

INSTRUCTIONS

01 Make the Đô Chua

Peel the carrot and daikon, then cut them into thin matchsticks. In a bowl, combine the sugar with water and white vinegar. Stir until the sugar is fully dissolved. Add the veggies to a jar or container, pour over the pickling liquid, make sure they're fully submerged, and let them pickle for 15-30 minutes.

02 Make the Garlic Maggi Aioli

Peel all the cloves from the garlic bulb and add them to a small saucepan with the 1 cup of oil. Set it over low heat and let the garlic gently bubble for 15 to 20 minutes, until the cloves are soft, golden, and easy to mash. Remove the saucepan from the heat, and let it cool down completely.

03 Blend the Garlic Maggi Aioli

Add the egg, confit garlic cloves, Maggi seasoning, and lime juice to a tall jar or cup that fits your immersion blender. Pour the cooled garlic oil on top. Place the blender at the bottom, turn it on, and hold it there until the mixture starts to thicken and become creamy, then slowly lift it to blend in the rest of the oil. Taste and adjust to your preference.

04 Prep the Toppings

Slice the cucumbers into long thin spears and the jalapeño into thin rounds. Wash the cilantro and cut off the stem ends. Dry thoroughly.

05 Sear the Salmon

Pat the salmon dry. Mix the salt, garlic powder, MSG, and white pepper, then season both sides. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat, then lay the salmon in skin side down. Press gently for the first few seconds so the skin crisps evenly, and cook for about 4 minutes. Flip and continue to cook for 2-3 more minutes or until the salmon reaches your desired doneness.

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06 Mix Garlic butter and make the Garlic Bread

Stir together the softened butter, minced garlic, and dried parsley until evenly combined.

Split the baguettes lengthwise, leaving the ends intact. Spread the garlic butter generously across the top of the baguette. Toast under a broiler for 2 minutes or until golden and fragrant.

07 Build Your Bánh Mì

Add the salmon to the garlic bread. Add the cucumber spears and a big handful of drained Đô Chua. Top with jalapeño and an excessive amount of cilantro. Finish with a drizzle of the Garlic Maggi Aioli. Enjoy!