

Upscale Your BLT

The BLT is a straightforward yet magnificent sandwich that everyone can enjoy. BLT stands for Bacon, Lettuce, and Tomato. Many people add their own twists to BLT sandwiches, but the foundation of every sandwich should start with freshly toasted bread, smoky bacon, fresh-cut lettuce, and sweet ripe tomatoes.

Try these tips for making your best BLT Sandwich.

The Bread

When making a BLT, picking out your bread is the first step, and using good-quality sandwich bread is always the best option. If you want extra flavor and crunch, the bread should be toasted. As long as your bread does not get over-toasted, your sandwich will have both a crispy outside and soft chewy inside. Toasting it will also add a pleasant roasted flavor.

The Bacon

There are many different ways to cook bacon. One more manageable and less messy way is cooking it in the oven. For a BLT, thin-cut bacon is a preferable option, but you can use whatever bacon you favor. To bake your bacon, you first need to prepare a rimmed cookie sheet with tin foil and preheat the oven to 400°F. While the oven heats, the bacon can be placed onto the baking sheet in a single layer. If you are cooking with a thicker cut of bacon, you may also consider putting the bacon on a wire rack on the baking sheet, so you do not have to flip the bacon halfway through cook time. Once the oven is preheated, the bacon should be cooked for 18-20 minutes for thin and 30-35 minutes for thick-cut, or until it is crispy.

The Lettuce

The next step in making a BLT is to add your lettuce. Just like bacon, everyone has their preference, and for a BLT, it all depends on how much crunch you want in your sandwich. If you like crunchy lettuce, iceberg is an inexpensive classic you can find in any store. A softer option would be butter lettuce. Butter lettuce has a silky soft texture that melts in your mouth. I like green leaf romaine, as it is more in the middle with a soft-top leaf and a crunchy bottom.

The Tomato

Many people argue that tomatoes are an essential ingredient in a BLT. This is because there are many ways it can ruin your sandwich. If your tomato is too ripe, it may be too soft or mushy for your sandwich, but if it is underripe, the tomato may be too solid and have a tart flavor. An overripe tomato may look and feel very soft with wrinkled skin and have black spots, bruises, or signs of mold. An underripe tomato will feel very solid, and it will not have an even color. When shopping for your perfect tomato, it should have a consistent color all around, and it will feel firm but also tender enough that it will give with a gentle press of your finger. Now that you have found your perfect tomato, you will want to slice it about 3/8 inch thick and lay it on a paper towel to soak up some of the extra juice. After the tomatoes have sat for a couple of minutes, you can season them with salt and pepper, and you are ready to enjoy your sandwich.

Here are some sauce ideas for your BLT:

- Garlic Aioli: aioli is just glorified mayo with garlic and lemon.
- Balsamic Mayo: Stir together 2 tablespoons mayonnaise with 1 tablespoon of Balsamic Reduction.
- Mustard Mayo: Mix 2 tablespoons mayo with 1/2 or 1 tablespoon mustard.
- Sriracha Mayo: Mix 1-2 teaspoons sriracha per 1 tablespoon mayo.
- Fry Sauce: Stir together equal parts mayo and ketchup
- Garlic Sauce: Mix 2 Tablespoons mustard, 2 Tablespoons sour cream, 1/4 cup mayo, and 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder.
- Horseradish Mayo: 1 Tablespoon prepared horseradish with 1 Tablespoon of mayo.
- Basil Mayo: Add fresh chopped basil to mayo or use prepared basil mayo.
- Hummus: Add prepared or homemade hummus.
- Fig jam: A sweet compliment to the salty bacon.
- Pesto: Spread with prepared or your special recipe.

Try these upscale BLT variations and additions:

- Fried egg
- Sprouts
- Pickled cherry peppers
- Roasted red pepper
- Cheese - pimiento, Cheddar, Feta, Provolone, Goat Cheese, Muenster, Mozzarella, or any of your favorites
- Substitute tomatoes with fried green tomatoes
- Thinly sliced radishes
- Pickled peppers
- Raw, grilled, or caramelized onion
- Substitute plain lettuce for arugula, watercress, or a spinach and watercress blend
- Sauteed chicken cutlet
- Broiled or grilled salmon fillet
- Slices of avocado or a guacamole

BLTs are a simple and easy recipe that you will never see the same way. Of course, no recipe is ever fixed, so feel free to mix and match the various upscales according to your liking. I know I will never get bored of these sandwiches with all the delicious new sauces and variations to try.