

Load up steak bahn mi with contrasting textures

By Christopher Kimball

Christopher Kimball's Milk Street

Evidence of French colonial rule is dotted throughout Vietnam, particularly in the cuisine. Coffee, butter, roasting, and beef are all French legacies, even if the coffee comes loaded with sweetened condensed milk and the beef is stir-fried with soy and fish sauces.

Baguettes also are everywhere, though they are crispier and lighter than the loaves found in France — and more likely to be stuffed with a distinctively Vietnamese riot of contrasting flavors. The result is the iconic bahn mi sandwich, which combines savory, sweet, spicy, and herbal flavors, as well as a blend of crunchy and chewy textures.

For our weeknight version from our book *Milk Street Tuesday Nights*, which limits recipes to about 45 minutes or less, we streamline the ingredient list and use quick-cooking skirt steak. Quick-pickled shredded carrots and fresh cilantro lend a characteristic brightness, and a spicy spread made with Sriracha hot sauce and mayonnaise adds fiery creaminess.

The best type of bread to use here is a supermarket baguette or French rolls with a light, airy crumb and thin, brittle crust, not a chewy, rustic bread. For added heat, include a few thin slices of jalapeno chilies in each sandwich. Also try it with a smear of pork or chicken pate.

Editor's note: To view additional recipes, visit <177milkstreet.com/ap>.



Milk Street via AP

Vietnamese Skirt Steak Sandwiches

Start to finish: 50 minutes

Servings: 4

- 3/4 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and shredded (1 cup)
- 1 pound skirt steak, cut crosswise into 3- to 4-inch pieces, patted dry
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons Sriracha
- Four 7- to 8-inch French bread rolls (see note), split horizontally
- 1/2 English cucumber, sliced into 1/8-inch-thick rounds
- 1 cup cilantro sprigs

In a medium bowl, stir together the vinegar, sugar, and 1 teaspoon salt. Stir in the carrots and set aside. Heat the broiler to high with one rack 4 inches from the element and another in the middle. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil.

Season the steak on both sides with 2 teaspoons kosher salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Place in an even layer on the prepared baking sheet and let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir together the mayonnaise and Sriracha; set aside. Pull out some of the interior crumb of each piece of bread; the remaining crust and crumb should be about 3/4 inch thick. Set aside.

Broil the steak until the center of the thickest piece reaches 125° Fahrenheit for medium-rare or 130° F for medium, 3 to 5 minutes, flipping once halfway through. Turn off the broiler, transfer the steak to a plate, and tent with foil. Let rest for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, arrange the bread halves cut sides down on the now-empty baking sheet; it's fine if they overlap a bit. Place in the oven on the middle rack and heat until the bread is warm, about 5 minutes. Strain the carrots.

Spread the cut sides of the bread evenly with the mayonnaise. Cut the steak against the grain on the bias into thin slices. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Evenly divide the steak and any accumulated juices among the bottom halves of the bread, then top with the carrots, cucumber slices, and cilantro. Top with the remaining bread.

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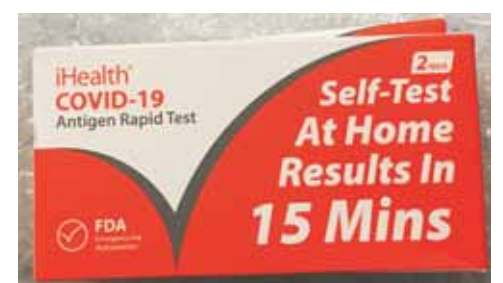
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