

AutoMoto

BLT Sandwiches with Sweet Potato Fries and Ranch Aioli

Serve with 2005 AutoMoto Merlot

Serves 6

For the Sandwiches and the Sweet Potato Fries:

4 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 3/8" French fry strips

¼ cup kosher salt

1 quart canola oil

12 slices white bread

2 Tbsp. butter, softened

6 Tbsp. mayonnaise

18 strips bacon, crisped in a pan or oven (recipe follows)

3 red tomatoes, sliced

1 head butter lettuce, leaves separated

Kosher Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

½ cup Ranch Aioli (recipe follows)

Place the potatoes and kosher salt in a large pot of water. Bring the potatoes to a boil. Remove from heat and allow the potatoes to sit in the hot water for 2 minutes. Carefully drain the potatoes and place on a sheet pan to cool. Meanwhile, pour the oil into a high-sided 2-quart saucepan and place over a medium-low flame. Heat the oil until it reaches 280° on a candy thermometer. Adjust the heat to hold at that temperature. Working in small batches, carefully drop the potato strips into the oil. Allow the potatoes to cook in the oil just until they begin to take on a little color (approximately 90 seconds). Remove the potatoes and allow them to chill on the sheet pan one more time. Increase the temperature of the oil to 350°.

While the oil heats up, remove the crust from the bread and begin assembling the sandwiches. Spread butter on one side of the bread and toast buttered side in a skillet. Spread six of the slices with mayonnaise. Add the bacon, lettuce and tomato. Season the tomato with salt and pepper. Top with the second piece of bread.

Once the sandwiches are assembled, fry the potatoes one additional time in the 350° oil. When the potatoes are golden brown remove them from the oil and toss in a mixing bowl with salt and pepper.

To serve: Place the fries and sandwich on a plate and serve with a side of Ranch Aioli.



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For the Ranch Aioli (makes 1 cup):

1 egg yolk
1 cup vegetable oil
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 packet Ranch Seasoning
Kosher salt

In a blender add egg yolk, mustard and lemon juice. Pulse until combined thoroughly. Scrape the sides of the blender with a spatula and pulse again. With the blender running at medium speed, slowly drizzle oil into mixture until the aioli is emulsified, scraping the sides with a spatula often (making sure to turn off the blender when scraping). Add the ranch seasoning packet and salt to taste.

*** To make your own bacon, follow this simple recipe ***

For the Sweet Tea Bacon:

4 to 6 lbs. pork belly
5 cups brewed tea
1 cup kosher salt
2/3 cup brown sugar
1 ½ cup apple cider
3 cups ice cubes
3 cups oak smoke chips

In a large saucepan combine the tea, salt, brown sugar and apple cider. Bring to a boil to dissolve the brown sugar and salt. Add ice and refrigerate. Once the brine has cooled, add the pork belly and let cure for 3 days, stirring occasionally. Remove from the brine and pat dry. Refrigerate on a rack for 24 hours, uncovered. Smoke for 2 hours at 120° F. Cool and refrigerate until ready to use.



VINEYARDS

This smooth-running Merlot began life in California's mellow North Coast American Viticultural Area (AVA), with some of its cool berries cruising up the Pacific Coast Highway from Monterey to make the blend thoroughly coastal. A hybrid of grapes from Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake, Monterey and San Benito counties, this finely-tuned Merlot runs on bright fruit, with an undercarriage of smooth, well-built tannins.

WINEMAKING

Traditional old-world assembly included fermentation in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks and extended maceration of the juice and skins to ensure a color and flavor-saturated chassis. Six months' aging in neutral French oak barrels burnished the veneer without making it too Woody, with the finished product rolling off the line ready to ramble.

WINEMAKER'S NOTES BY MELISSA "THE DRIVER" BATES

"Stick your nose in the front seat of this plush ride and you smell dark blackberry and black cherry fruit, pie spices, vanilla and sweet oak toast. Start it up and you realize that this baby boasts more cylinders than the standard Merlot and is constructed for maximum comfort and enjoyment, especially with pork roasts, marinated lamb chops and lasagna."

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VARIETAL 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon
APPELLATION California
GROWING REGIONS 70% North Coast
(Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake counties)
 30% Central Coast
(Monterey, San Benito counties)

FERMENTATION 100% stainless steel
AGING Six months in neutral French oak barrels
ALCOHOL 13.5%
TOTAL ACIDITY 0.57 g/100 ml
PH 3.65