



ROCK'S "AFTER MIDNIGHT" CUBANO

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What is the relationship between food, jazz, and American history? In the late 19th and early 20th century, jazz spread into American life, blending many influences and finding distinct forms in each community it was played, from New Orleans to Kansas City to Harlem. Chef Rock Harper joined us to prepare a few dishes from America's most historic jazz communities as we explored how each city produced unique culinary creations to feed both musicians and their audiences and discussed how the foods that fed jazz are as improvisational, innovative, and rooted in tradition as the music itself.

Some of the most elegant and acclaimed jazz venues of the early-mid 20th century were to be found in Harlem—venues like the Lafayette Theatre and the Apollo featured the most celebrated black performers of the era and welcomed the black patrons of Harlem in to hear them. While Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Bessie Smith packed the best known venues, the community of Harlem was also producing new styles of jazz that reflected the neighborhood's changing demographic. Afro-Cuban or "Latin jazz" took hold in the 1940s, as musicians like Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo collaborated to blend rhythms, instruments, and languages together into an entirely new style of American jazz. In many Harlem eateries and homes today, traditional Southern cooking known as "soul food" and foods from the Caribbean are served side by side. Today we've blended them into one dish, a version of the classic Cuban sandwich that features the iconic Southern flavors of pimento cheese, Virginia ham, pulled barbecued pork, and creole mustard. Chef Rock calls it the "After Midnight," a nod to the Cuban medianoche sandwich and to the time when Harlem's great jazz music could best be heard.

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Makes 4 sandwiches

Ingredients

8 ounces plain cream cheese
 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
 2 tablespoons roasted red peppers, diced
 One 1-pound loaf Italian or ciabatta bread
 1/4 cup mayonnaise
 8 ounces thinly sliced cooked Virginia ham
 8 ounces pulled pork barbecue
 4 whole dill pickles, thinly sliced lengthwise
 1/4 cup Creole mustard
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter (1/4 stick), melted

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 200°F and arrange a rack in the middle.
2. Mix together the cream cheese, cheddar cheese and red peppers in a bowl. Set aside. Cut the loaf of bread in half horizontally and open it up like a book. Spread the mayonnaise, if using, on the bottom piece of bread.

3. Evenly spread the ham and pulled pork on top of the mayonnaise. Arrange the cheese mixture and pickles on the meat.
4. Spread the creole mustard on the top piece of bread and close the sandwich. Press gently on the top to compact the sandwich slightly. Cut it in half crosswise; set both halves aside.
5. Lay two 20-inch-long sheets of aluminum foil on a work surface. Brush half of the melted butter on the tops of the sandwiches. Place each sandwich butter-side down on the sheets of foil. Brush the bottoms of the sandwiches with the remaining butter. Fold the foil around the sandwiches to completely encase them.
6. Heat a large frying pan on low heat until hot, about 4 minutes. Place 1 wrapped sandwich in the pan. Place a cast-iron skillet, Dutch oven, or heavy pot on the sandwich, push down on the skillet or pot to further compact the cubano, and cook undisturbed for 10 minutes.
7. Remove the skillet or pot (careful: It may be hot). Flip the sandwich and place the skillet or pot back on top of it. Cook undisturbed until the cheese has melted and the sandwich is warmed through, about 10 minutes more. Remove to the oven and repeat with the second sandwich. When both are ready, remove the foil, cut into pieces, and serve.



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