Crispy Cranberry-Brie Turkey Panini with Fresh Rosemary



Christmas Leftover Series | An Easy December 26 Lunch

Give your Christmas turkey a delicious second life with this crispy, cheesy cranberry-Brie panini. Tender slices of leftover roast turkey are layered with creamy Brie, sweet-tart cranberry sauce, and fresh rosemary between thick slices of sourdough bread.
Pressed in a skillet until golden and crunchy, the bread develops a buttery crust while the Brie melts into the warm filling. It's a quick, satisfying lunch that tastes completely different from yesterday's holiday dinner.

Recipe at a Glance

- Servings: 2 sandwiches
- Prep Time: 10 minutes
- Cook Time: 8–10 minutes
- Total Time: 18–20 minutes
- Oven Temperature: Not required
- Equipment: Panini press or large skillet, second heavy skillet for pressing, cutting board, knife, spatula

YOU'LL NEED

- 4 thick slices sourdough or rustic Italian bread
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened (or mayonnaise for spreading on the outside)
- 4 ounces Brie cheese, thinly sliced
- 1 cup cooked leftover turkey breast, sliced or shredded
- ⅓ cup leftover whole-berry cranberry sauce
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

1. **Prepare the bread**

Place the bread slices on a cutting board. Spread softened butter or mayonnaise evenly over one side of each slice. These buttered sides will form the crispy outside of the sandwiches.
Turn two slices over so the unbuttered sides face up.

2. Layer the filling

Arrange half of the Brie slices over the unbuttered sides of the two bread slices.
Divide the turkey evenly between the sandwiches. Spoon the cranberry sauce over the turkey, then sprinkle with chopped fresh rosemary.
Finish with the remaining Brie slices. Placing Brie on both sides of the filling helps hold the sandwich together as the cheese melts.

3. Close the sandwiches

Place the remaining bread slices on top, with the buttered sides facing outward.
Press gently so the filling sits evenly inside the bread without squeezing out the cranberry sauce.

4. Toast and press

Heat a large skillet over medium-low to medium heat.
Place the sandwiches in the skillet. If necessary, cook one at a time.
Set a second heavy skillet on top of the sandwiches to press them gently.
Cook for approximately 3-4 minutes per side, checking regularly.
Turn carefully and cook the other side until the bread is deep golden brown and crisp and the Brie has melted.
If using a panini press, follow the manufacturer's instructions and cook until the bread is crisp and the cheese is soft and melted.

5. Slice and serve

Transfer the sandwiches to a cutting board and let them rest for about 1 minute. Slice diagonally and serve while warm.

Before You Begin: Using Christmas Leftovers

This recipe uses cooked leftover roast turkey and cranberry sauce. Remove any skin, bones, or excess fat from the turkey before slicing or shredding.
For the best sandwich texture, use chilled, thick cranberry sauce rather than a very runny cranberry sauce.
No leftover turkey? Use freshly cooked turkey breast or rotisserie chicken. No homemade cranberry sauce? Whole-berry canned cranberry sauce works well too.

Flavor Profile, Pairings & Kitchen Notes

Flavor and Texture: Crisp, buttery sourdough surrounds tender turkey, creamy melted Brie, sweet-tart cranberry sauce, and fragrant rosemary. Every bite balances savory, creamy, and fruity flavors.

What to Serve With It:

- A simple arugula salad with lemon vinaigrette
- Warm leftover turkey broth for dipping
- A cup of tomato soup
- A small bowl of mixed greens with sliced apples

Make-Ahead Tip: Slice the turkey and chop the rosemary up to 2 days ahead. Keep them refrigerated in separate airtight containers. Assemble and toast the sandwiches just before serving for the crispiest result.
Storage: Panini sandwiches are best enjoyed immediately. Refrigerate any assembled sandwich containing turkey or Brie promptly and within 2 hours. For best texture, avoid storing toasted sandwiches.

Easy Substitutions:

- No Brie? Use mild goat cheese or sliced Havarti.
- No sourdough? Rustic Italian bread or sturdy country-style bread works well.
- No fresh rosemary? Use finely chopped fresh sage or a small pinch of dried rosemary.
- No leftover cranberry sauce? Use whole-berry canned cranberry sauce or a thick cranberry relish.
- Want extra crunch? Add a thin layer of leftover cooked stuffing, making sure it is reheated thoroughly.

Cook's Confidence Cue: Keep the skillet at medium-low to medium heat. If the bread browns too quickly, the cheese may remain firm in the middle. Give the sandwich time to toast slowly so the Brie melts before the crust becomes too dark.