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### The Perfect PB&J

The history of the Peanut Butter and Jelly(PB&J) sandwich is a long and illustrious one. Men and women of modest means alongside almost every great man or woman in the past 70 years have eaten this culinary treat side by side. However, circa 1994 in a discreet South Carolina household, under the careful hands of a rather industrious young lad, the sandwich was perfected. This guide describes the essential steps in the creation of this more perfect form of PB&J sandwich. Read and follow with the utmost care.

The first decision you face is whether or not to make a sandwich at all. Are you hungry? If you answered “no” to this question you may stop reading until you *are* hungry. If you answered “yes,” however, there is clearly a potential sandwich out there in dire need of construction. Since this is to be a thorough guide to said construction, it will not be assumed that you have the necessary ingredients on hand. Travel may be required. If this means you must rise from your couch, so be it. Your “Ninja Warrior” marathon can wait.

You must now partake in the acquiring of said ingredients. This means a visit to that great congregator of general public known as “The Grocery Store.” Slide into your vehicle and proceed to the parking area of your nearest preferred super market. The safety of parking lots is suspect at best. Beware of pedestrians. Nothing will ruin your endeavor more quickly or more thoroughly than vehicular assault.

Once inside, you will notice the selections of Peanut Butter and Jelly are situated shoulder to shoulder on the shelf. This is not an accident. The PB&J sandwich has affected

the layouts of grocery stores nationwide for decades. Such is the power of this sweet cuisine. There is a wide selection of peanut butter and most brands will suffice. However, know that if you select a crunchy peanut butter you are doing it wrong. Wrong, not only in peanut butter selection, but in life.

You may be enticed by the curious containers holding both peanut butter *and* jelly together. If you are this lazy you may as well forgo the bread as well, smash some croutons into the foul mixture and eat it from the jar. Shame be upon you if this crosses your mind. Other spurious time-savers may fall under your gaze, such as prefabbed sandwiches or sporks. Put them out of your mind and move on, for you must now confront the subject of jelly.

It is here that you face a bitter conflict that has been waged for centuries. It divides populations around the world and is destined to continue for as long as time itself exists. No one knows how many men have died over this fierce and contentious debate, but one thing is certain: The time to choose sides is upon you. Grape or Strawberry? Whatever your choice, this guide will remain steadfast in its neutrality on the matter despite how blatantly obvious it is that Strawberry *wins forever*. You will notice other selections, but fringe candidates such as apple or peach merit no consideration for this task and you will do well to ignore them. Make your choice and continue.

Next you must make your way to the aisle of bread. The selection you see before you is surely gargantuan, but do not be daunted. Locate the area containing white sandwich bread and weigh your options carefully. Only the foolhardy select a wheat bread. This is a PB&J sandwich after all. Choosing a healthful bread is like ordering a diet soft drink with your double Baconator. So, will you go the classical route with a choice of “Wonder Bread?” Will you be overtaken by nostalgia when your eyes graze over the “Iron Kids?” Or are you feeling

more fanciful with a choice of “Nature's Own” or anything with a farm on the package. All are suitable choices; pick one and move for the exit.

Once you have escaped the clutches of your local supermarche, point your means of transportation homeward posthaste. A normal PB&J sandwich can be eaten at any time; however, the Perfect PB&J demands more respect. It must be eaten between 11am and 2pm. If you cannot achieve construction and consumption within this time frame you will wait until the following day or face eternal karmic consequences. You have been warned, proceed at your own risk.

Now for the final phase: Assemblage. Gather your ingredients. Necessary items include your selected peanut butter, jelly and bread, a butter knife for spreading, a toaster, and a plate or paper towel on which to place your sandwich. Arrange these items upon your counter top in an orderly fashion. Select three pieces of bread and return the remainder of the loaf to its proper place of storage. Lightly toast one piece and place it to the side. You will now have two normal slices of bread and one toasted. Select one of the normal pieces and place it on your plate/paper towel.

Apply an even coat of peanut butter to this untoasted slice of bread, making sure to spread all the way to the edges. Slide this piece aside and select the toasted piece of bread. Spread a thin band of peanut butter around the edge on the face of this slice. Heap your jelly in the center. Combine this with the previously peanut buttered slice firmly. If done correctly the peanut butter has now sealed the jelly inside, preventing any spillage. You should now have a sandwich and one untoasted slice of bread left over.

Next, be sure the toasted slice of bread on the sandwich is facing up. Once again on the toasted slice, spread a small ring of peanut butter around the edge and place jelly in the center. Take your final loose untoasted slice and slather it with peanut butter. Place this slice

on top and seal the jelly. You will now have a clean two-tiered PB&J sandwich; a perfect PB&J sandwich. The toasting of the center piece has many benefits. It prevents any sogginess on behalf of the jelly should the sandwich be stored (not recommended.) It acts as a ridged structural reinforcement to hold the sandwich together when handled. And, most importantly, it adds a delightful new texture to this otherwise common sandwich.

Your final step is the simplest of all. Pour a glass of milk and enjoy your well-earned feast. And, should you feel so inclined, spread the gospel of the Perfect PB&J sandwich as far and wide as your means allow.