

NOT YOUR ORDINARY BURGER



John Wayne and Jean Arthur in “A Lady Takes a Chance” 1943.

A little history about burgers. According to Alan Davidson in his wonderful encyclopedic book *The Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford University Press 1999), the word “hamburger” first showed up in print around 1890. Cooked, flavored patties of meat however date a long way back and appear in many cuisines. It’s thought that the port of Hamburg in Germany and its *Hamburg Steak*, enjoyed by sailors there who introduced it to others in their travels, is probably the birthplace for burgers as we know them today. Their fate was sealed when “*hamburgers*” served in a bun were introduced at the St. Louis World Fair of 1904 and the rest is history.

Burger purists will insist that burgers are only made from beef and that using any other base ingredient puts it in a different category. I don’t agree and all you have to do is look in current cookbooks and, in the market, to find burgers made from fish, birds, and increasingly popular vegetable/vegetarian versions.

Here are some non-beef versions that are worth exploring.

Recipes Included:

- Pork Burgers with Slaw
- Shrimp Burgers with Peach Aioli
- Kidney Bean Burger
- Lamb Burgers
- Portobello Mushroom Burgers
- Duck Burgers
- Chickpea Burgers



PORK BURGERS WITH SLAW

Makes 4

This uses your favorite bottled barbeque sauce to punch up the flavor.

For the slaw

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon chicken stock or milk

2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar or to taste
2 generous cups thinly sliced green cabbage
1/2 cup very finely shredded carrot
1/2 cup thinly sliced sweet red onions
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the pork burgers

1/2 cup of your favorite tomato-based barbecue sauce
1 teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
1 1/2 pounds of ground pork
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Olive oil, for the grill rack
4 buns or kaiser rolls or another soft squishy roll of some sort, split and toasted or grilled

Make the slaw:

Whisk together the mayonnaise, stock, vinegar, and sugar in a large bowl until smooth. Add the cabbage, carrot, red onions, and salt and pepper to taste and toss to coat. Set aside.

Make the pork burgers:

Prepare grill for direct-heat cooking over medium-hot heat. Alternately heat a ridged grill pan over medium-high heat.

Stir together the barbecue sauce, salt and vinegar in a medium bowl until combined. Set aside. In another bowl add the pork, black pepper and 3 tablespoons of the barbecue sauce mixture and gently mix together. Do not overmix. Form the mixture into 4 patties, each about 3/4 of an inch thick, being careful not to pack the pork too tightly.

Oil the grill rack and then grill the burgers, flipping them once or twice, until just cooked through, about 8 minutes total. Then brush the top of each patty with remaining sauce mixture, flip again, and grill for 30 seconds to get a little char. Repeat, so that both sides of the burger have been coated with the barbecue sauce mixture.

Assemble the burgers, starting with the buns and the burgers and adding a heaping tablespoon of coleslaw on top of each one. Consume with gusto!



SHRIMP BURGERS WITH PEACH AIOLI

Serves 4

1 pound peeled and deveined shrimp (any size), finely chopped
1 large egg white, lightly beaten
5 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 tablespoon minced parsley
1 tablespoon minced green onion
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce, white preferred
Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste
Drops of hot sauce to taste
1/2 cup or so coarse dry breadcrumbs (panko preferred)
Clarified butter or olive oil for sautéing
4 soft brioche or Hawaiian rolls
Peach aioli (recipe follows)

Toppings: Tomato slices, crisp lettuce leaves, Kirby cucumber slices

In a large bowl add the shrimp, egg, and mayonnaise and combine with the next 7 ingredients. Stir in 1/2 cup of the breadcrumbs. Don't overmix. You want the cakes to just hold together and be delicate in texture. Mix in additional crumbs if the mixture is too moist. (Cook a small tester to make sure).

Form into cakes. Lightly dust both sides with additional breadcrumbs. Can be made ahead and stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 hours. In a large skill over moderate heat, sauté the burgers in clarified butter or oil until lightly browned on both sides, about 3 minutes per side.

Lightly toast the halves of the brioche buns if desired and spread generously with the aioli. Add the cooked shrimp burger to the bottom half, then the toppings. Cover with the roll tops.

Peach Aioli

Makes 3/4 cup

1 cup peeled and sliced ripe peaches
1 teaspoon chopped ginger
1 teaspoon chopped garlic
1 tablespoon fresh lime or lemon juice
1 teaspoon honey or to taste
Salt and drops of hot sauce to taste
1/3 cup mayonnaise
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend till smooth. Correct seasoning to your taste.

KIDNEY BEAN BURGER

Serves 4

You can grill or sauté these, but I prefer the latter because they are more delicate and tend to fall apart since they don't have the raw protein that meats and fishes have to hold everything together. If you decide to grill them, I recommend a hinged grill rack, which makes it easy to turn them.

3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup chopped green onions, including both white and green parts
1 small seeded and stemmed poblano pepper, finely chopped (about 1/2 cup)
2 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 15-ounce can cooked kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1/2 cup roughly chopped and loosely packed cilantro leaves
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1/2 cup toasted whole grain breadcrumbs, made from 2 slices or so of bread
1/2 teaspoon pure chile powder such as Ancho or Chipotle
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon salt or to taste

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a small sauté pan over moderate heat and add the onions, pepper and garlic and sauté for a minute or two to just soften a little and remove the raw taste. Remove from heat and place in the bowl of a food processor along with the beans. Pulse 2 or 3 times to roughly chop the beans. Be careful not to over process.

Place mixture in a bowl and gently stir in rest of ingredients. Divide the mixture into 4 portions and form into patties. Chill uncovered for at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator.

Add remaining 2 tablespoons oil to a sauté pan and over medium heat cook the burgers until nicely browned on both sides, about 5 minutes.

Serve on a bun with traditional garnishes.



LAMB BURGERS

Serves 4

This North African-inspired burger is delicious grilled.

- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon red chili flakes
- 1/3 cup finely chopped cilantro
- 1 1/2-pounds ground lamb (not lean but we don't usually have a choice)
- 4 (6- to 7-inch) pita pockets
- 2 small heirloom tomatoes cored, seeded and coarsely chopped
- Cucumber and yogurt sauce (recipe follows)

Mince garlic and mash to a paste with 3/4 teaspoon salt using side of a large heavy knife.

Stir together garlic paste, cumin, coriander, paprika, cinnamon, cayenne, and cilantro. Sprinkle evenly over lamb and mix with your hands until combined (do not overmix). Form lamb mixture into 4 (3/4-inch-thick) patties (4 inches in diameter).

Cut off enough from one side of each pita to leave a 5-inch opening and open pockets.

Prepare grill for direct-heat cooking over medium-hot charcoal (medium heat for gas).

Oil grill rack, then grill patties, covered only if using a gas grill, turning over once, 6 to 7 minutes total for medium-rare. Grill pitas, turning over once, until lightly toasted, 1 to 2 minutes total.

Slide patties into pita pockets with tomato slices and a healthy spoonful or two of cucumber yogurt sauce.

Cucumber and yogurt sauce

Real Greek yogurt is made using sheep's milk and often with a small percentage of goat. Let this recipe sit in the refrigerator for a couple of hours and the garlic flavor mellows. Overnight is great. You'll note no dill or lemon but of course, you can add them if you want.

1 cup plain full-fat Greek yogurt
2 cups coarsely grated English or Persian cucumber unpeeled
2 large garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
Big pinch sugar
2 tablespoons chicken stock or milk
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Add the Greek yogurt to a large mixing bowl and whisk till its smooth

Gently squeeze the cucumber with your hands to remove most of its water. Then add to the mixing bowl with the Greek yogurt.

Add the remaining ingredients to the bowl and mix. Refrigerate covered for an hour then taste and adjust the seasoning to your taste.



PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM BURGERS

Serves 4

You can cook the mushrooms in a preheated 400° oven or on a grill over moderately high heat.

4 large portobello mushrooms
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons Balsamic vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
Pimento cheese (recipe follows)
4 soft brioche or other hamburger buns
To top: Slices of tomato, iceberg lettuce leaves, sandwich pickle slices

Remove and discard the stems and scrape out the black gills from the mushrooms. Whisk together the olive oil and balsamic vinegar in a small bowl. Paint mixture onto both sides of the mushrooms. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Cook the mushrooms either in a preheated oven or on the grill until softened and juices are bubbling.

Meanwhile spread the pimento cheese generously on the cut sides of the buns. Place a cooked portobello on the bun bottom half and top with tomato, lettuce and pickles. Eat!

Pimento Cheese

Makes 4 cups or so

This makes more than you'll need for this recipe. But it's great to have on hand. This is an adaptation of a recipe from my co-host on the KSRO Good Food Hour, Steve Garner,

who is a “Son of the South” having grown up in Louisville. He notes” I’ve never talked with anybody who agrees what should go into Pimento Cheese”. Of course, pimentos are what the recipe was named after, but I prefer Piquillos which are also now widely available.

16 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, freshly grated
3 or 4 tablespoons of good cream cheese (I like Gina Marie brand)
1/3 to 1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/2 teaspoon dried onion powder
1 teaspoon runny honey or sugar to taste
8 ounces jarred pimentos or piquillo peppers, drained and chopped
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons hot sauce such as siracha

Place all ingredients into a food processor. Pulse until it forms a smooth paste with just a little texture. If desired add additional mayonnaise for a creamier consistency.

DUCK BURGERS

Makes 4

In my restaurant days, we’d always order whole ducks. The money maker was the breasts. Roasting legs simply with salt and pepper is delicious but they were a hard sell. Usually, we’d pull the meat off the legs and the rest of the carcass and turn it into meatballs or burgers. We are so lucky today to have duck available to us (often frozen.) This also works with those of you who are hunters and have a freezer full of ducks that you don’t know what to do with.

1 pound ground or finely chopped duck meat
1/4 cup blanched slivered almonds, lightly toasted and chopped
1/4 cup raisins, preferably golden and chopped
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
1/4 cup breadcrumbs such as panko
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons crumbled dried mint
1 large egg, mixed with a fork
Olive oil for sautéing
Soft squishy buns
Traditional garnishes

Combine all the ingredients except the olive oil. With wet hands, form into patties about 3/4 inch thick. Heat about 1/4 inch of olive oil in a large, nonstick skillet over moderate heat. Fry the patties until they are browned on both sides, about 6 minutes total.

Place on top of toasted buns with traditional garnish and enjoy.

CHICKPEA BURGERS

Makes 4

Don't use canned chickpea/garbanzos. They won't work. Any of you who make falafel will recognize this recipe.

8 ounces dried chickpeas
1 cup loosely packed chopped parsley
1 cup loosely packed chopped cilantro
1/2 cup finely chopped scallion, both white and green parts
2 large cloves of garlic, minced
1 teaspoon toasted ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon toasted ground coriander
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 tablespoon chickpea or all-purpose flour
5 tablespoons or so water
Vegetable oil for frying

Place chickpeas in a bowl and cover with at least 2 inches of water. Allow to soak for 24 hours. Drain well and place in a food processor along with next 10 ingredients. Process for a minute or two on high until the mixture is mostly smooth.

Divide into 6 portions and form into burgers. Heat 1/2-inch oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add burgers and cook on both sides until golden brown and crusty.

Slather buns with tahini sauce, add a burger, and top with tomato slices, sweet red or white onion slices, and arugula or shredded lettuce.

Tahini Sauce

Makes 1 cup

Tahini pastes vary widely with some being bitter and grainy. My favorite is Soom which you can easily order online.

1/2 cup well-stirred tahini paste at room temperature
1/4 cup or so warm water
1 –2 tablespoons lemon juice (more to taste)
1–2 tablespoons olive oil (optional)
2 large garlic cloves, finely minced or pressed

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Optional additions (Not all. Pick one!)

- chili flakes or chili paste (like sambal olek or sriracha)
- a dash of soy sauce or liquid aminos
- a dash of toasted sesame oil (for extra sesame flavor)
- a teaspoon or two of zaatar spice
- a teaspoon or two of ground cumin
- fresh chopped chives, Italian parsley, mint or basil
- a tablespoon or two of plain Greek yogurt

Place tahini paste and warm water in a medium bowl and whisk until smooth. Once you start whisking, it will thicken, so feel free to thin it out.

Add the remaining ingredients to the bowl and whisk until creamy and smooth. It will thicken as it cools in the fridge.

Taste and adjust the salt and lemon to your liking. Whisk in any of the optional ingredients.

Will keep for up to a week refrigerated.

John Ash