

TURKEY BURGER WITH CHEESE ON A PORTOBELLO BUN

If you're looking for ways to lighten your meals without giving up on some of your favorite summer dishes, try this turkey burger. Turkey meat is a lower fat and cholesterol option than beef and with the right ingredients mixed in, you might not even notice that much of a difference. And rather than a bread bun, I like to use portobello mushrooms to cradle the burger. Topped with cheese, pickles and bbq sauce, it's hard to beat. Now you'll have more room for dessert!

INGREDIENTS (serves 6)

FOR BURGERS:

- 1 lb chopped turkey meat
- 3 links sweet turkey sausage
- 1 tablespoon of your favorite spice mix
- 1 tablespoon of your favorite bbq sauce
- 1 teaspoon of your favorite hot sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fresh ground pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lb Gruyere, cut into slices
- Pickles for garnish
- BBQ sauce for drizzle

FOR MUSHROOMS:

6 portobello mushrooms, cleaned and stem removed (*NOTE: Don't drown in water. I just use a damp paper towel to brush off any*

dirt).

Olive oil for brushing

Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a large bowl, combine turkey and sausage meats, spice mix, bbq sauce, hot sauce, salt and pepper. Using a large wooden spoon or your hands, combine until all the ingredients are well distributed.

Separate the meat mixture into 6 even balls. I like to use a large round cookie cutter (about 4") to press the balls into an even patty shape. Place the patties on an oiled plate.

Brush the portobello mushrooms with olive oil and season with salt and pepper on both sides. Place on a separate plate.

Oil your grill grates. Heat the grill to 375 degrees. Place the burgers on direct heat for 4-5 minutes. Flip and continue to grill for an additional 4-5 minutes (depending upon thickness). You want the patties to feel firm to the touch, with a little give in the center. For the last minute, place the cheese on top so it can melt.

While the burgers are grilling, place the portobello mushrooms on the grill, direct heat for 2 minutes each side. Keep an eye on them. If they cook too fast, just remove from grill, allowing whatever liquid accumulated to drip off.

To serve, place a portobello top side down on a plate. Place the burger on top. Garnish with pickles and a drizzle of bbq sauce.

NO MAYO COLESLAW

Every year we have a big block party and I always like to bring something that goes with hotdogs and hamburgers. Because everything sits out for hours, I can't make my usual coleslaw because it has mayo. Here's a vinegar-based recipe with a tangy dressing. It's best to bring a bowl of ice to place under the salad bowl to keep it chilled.

INGREDIENTS (serves 10)

FOR THE SALAD:

$\frac{1}{2}$ head green cabbage, shredded

$\frac{1}{2}$ head purple cabbage, shredded

2 large carrots, peeled and grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ red onion, cut in half and thinly sliced

3 scallions, chopped into 1" pieces

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sesame seeds

FOR THE DRESSING:

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

1 tablespoon pure maple syrup

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Dijon mustard

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 teaspoon garlic salt

Freshly cracked black pepper

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, combine all the salad ingredients. Mix with your hands to distribute the different vegetables equally.

In medium sized bowl, whisk together all the dressing ingredients. Pour the dressing over the salad. Toss the salad well and cover with plastic wrap. Place in the refrigerator for at least two hours before serving to allow the cabbage to soften and the flavors to meld. You can even make it the night before.

Re-toss the coleslaw when ready to serve.

GRILLED STEELHEAD TROUT

As a nice alternative to salmon, try steelhead trout. The fillets are usually thinner than most salmon fillets, so I find they cook more evenly on the grill. Here's a simple recipe that comes together in no time. It's a great last-minute dish for those lazy summer days.

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

1 lb steelhead fish, filleted

3 tablespoons soy sauce

3 tablespoons maple syrup

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

1 garlic clove, minced.

Salt and pepper

Olive oil

PREPARATION

Season the fish with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce, maple syrup, mustard and garlic. Mix well.

Place fish in a large Ziploc bag. Pour in marinade and seal bag. Massage marinade around fish and place in refrigerator for 2-4 hours.

Oil grill racks. Preheat grill to 375 degrees. Place trout skin side down on grill, direct heat for 4 minutes. Keep an eye on it, because the skin may catch fire. If so, using a spatula, just move piece to indirect side. Flip, and cook on direct heat for an additional 4 minutes. (If you like your fish more well done, maybe add a minute on each side.)

Serve with coleslaw, rice or your favorite side dish.

ROASTED TOMATO SOUP

It's harvest time, so that means the neighbors have way too many tomatoes to know what to do with them. So, being the lucky recipient of their abundance, I'm putting this year's bounty to good use with this creamy roasted tomato soup. There's nothing better than making tomato soup from fresh garden ingredients. Wait, oh yes, there is one thing better—creamy homemade garden tomato soup with a grilled cheese sandwich. Gotta go – I've got some sandwiches to make.

INGREDIENTS

1 dozen ripe plum tomatoes (or whatever tomatoes you have from the garden)

1 onion, thickly sliced

1 head of garlic

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 Tablespoon olive oil

2 cups of chicken stock

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream

salt and pepper to taste

FOR GARNISH

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated

Parmesan fresh basil leaves

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place aluminum foil on the bottom of a baking sheet.

Slice a $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick cross in one end of each tomato. This will make it easier to peel the tomatoes once they are roasted. Wrap a small piece of aluminum foil around the base of the garlic head to hold it together. Place the tomatoes, onion slices and foiled garlic head on the baking sheet. Drizzle all with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Using your hands, gently massage the oil and spices to cover all sides of the vegetables. Place in oven and roast for 30 minutes.

After thirty minutes, turn the vegetables over and roast for an additional 30 minutes. Allow to cool.

Peel the skin off of the tomatoes and discard skins. Pressing the base of the garlic head, squeeze the roasted garlic out, discarding the skin. Place the tomatoes, onions and roasted garlic in a dutch oven. Add the chicken stock and red pepper flakes. Re-season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then lower to a simmer for forty-five minutes, stirring

occasionally. Allow to cool down.

Using an immersion blender, puree the soup. When you're ready to serve, reheat and add the cream.

Pour into bowls and garnish with parmesan and basil leaves.

GRILLED CHICKEN THIGHS

Now that it's grill season, it's time to spice things up a bit. Here's a simple marinade for grilled chicken thighs. I like to use bone-in pieces because it takes longer to cook and allows the chicken to absorb more of the smokey flavor.

INGREDIENTS

MARINADE

1/2 cup orange juice

1 tablespoon salt

1 teaspoon ground pepper

2 tablespoons molasses

3 chipotle pepper plus 1 tablespoon adobo sauce

GRILLED CHICKEN

8 Bone-in Chicken thighs

Salt & Pepper to taste

½ cup BBQ sauce for basting, ½ cup for serving*

PREPARATION

In a medium sized bowl, mix all the marinade ingredients together. Place inside a large Ziploc bag. Add the chicken pieces and seal tightly. Massage the marinade around the chicken pieces and place in the refrigerator at least 4 hours before you intend to grill it, but it's best to marinate overnight.

OPTIONAL : If you have a smoker pan, soak some wood chips about an hour before you plan to grill.

When you're ready to grill, take the chicken out of the refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature for 30 minutes. Place the chicken pieces on a platter, discard the Ziploc bag and remaining marinade.

Pre-heat your grill to 375 degrees. (Optional: Drain the water from the smoker chips and place the chips in the smoker pan and light as per directions for your grill.)

Place the chicken on indirect heat, close the lid and cook for 20 minutes. Flip the pieces and cook for another 20 minutes. (Cook times depend on how evenly your grill cooks. 40 minutes is approximate. Dark meat chicken is done when internal temperature of the chicken is at 165 degrees.)

To finish, brush some BBQ sauce on top and close lid for 3 minutes. Flip pieces, brush some BBQ sauce on other side and close lid for 3 minutes.

Serve with extra BBQ sauce on the side.

**NOTE: I used STUBBS Original BBQ Sauce, but feel free to use your favorite.*

BACKYARD PASTA SALAD

So you've been invited to your neighbor's house for a backyard barbecue and they've asked you to bring a side. You're tired of making salads that no one eats, and want something that won't spoil quickly in the heat. Ah ha! How about a pasta salad? You've got tons of tomatoes and cucumbers in your garden and you have that nice bottle of zesty lemon balsamic vinegar you picked up on vacation from that cute little olive oil shop that you've never opened. Why not?

INGREDIENTS (serves 6-8)

SALAD

1 pound dry pasta (something twisty like Barilla Fusilli, Rotini or Gemelli)

1 cucumber, sliced

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

1/2 cup pitted olives, sliced

half of a large red onion, thinly sliced

6 ounces crumbled feta cheese (or goat cheese)

DRESSING

1/4 cup extra light virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons zesty balsamic vinegar (or any vinegar of your choice)

zest of one lemon

1 tablespoon freshly-squeezed lemon juice

1 teaspoons dried oregano crushed

1 small garlic clove, minced

1 teaspoon honey

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta as per box instructions to al dente. Drain the pasta in a colander and rinse with cold water. Allow to cool and set aside.

Add the remainder of the salad ingredients (except for the feta cheese) into a large bowl. Add the pasta and gently toss. Add in half the feta cheese and lightly toss.

Pour the dressing on top and lightly toss. Cover bowl with clear wrap for at least one hour before serving.

When ready to serve, toss again and sprinkle the remaining feta cheese on top.