



Build a Better Summer Burger

Confession time: Years ago, my summer burger ventures resulted in foot-high flames, broken burgers and apologies on a bun. I was a patty-squishing, fast-flipping, burger-poking menace. No wonder I ended up relegated to dessert.

Since then, I've learned the secret to compliment-inducing burgers starts with the right meat and is followed by a gentle touch, not acrobatics with a spatula.

PERFECT BLEND

Selecting the right fat content for a burger is a little like Goldilocks' quest for porridge. Regular ground has so much fat your burger will shrink to the size of a slider. Excess fat can also cause dramatic flames on a grill or leave a puddle of grease in the skillet.

On the other end of the spectrum, extra lean ground yields burgers that are dry and crumbly.

Fortunately, lean beef is just right. For lean meats like ground poultry, smaller patties and lower cooking temperatures will help keep your burger juicy.

PERFECT FORM

Overworking your meat mixture will leave you with a dense burger that's more like a hockey puck than a patty. Wet or oiled hands can help you handle the meat as little as possible. For light patties that will keep their shape, remember these points:

- **Less is more:** When it comes to burgers, don't overwork or compact the meat. You want to mix not mash, form not force.



Charmian Christie

- **Unity is strength:** Whether you're making full-sized burgers or two-bite sliders, a uniform patty is key. Divide the mixed meat into equal portions before forming the patties. Once the meat is divided, roll each portion gently into a ball, resisting the urge to squeeze it into formation.

- **Thin is in:** While mile-high patties look enticing, they will dry out before they're safely cooked all the way through. To form a patty that retains its juices, gently flatten the meat ball, aiming for 2 cm to 2.5 cm (¾ inch to 1 inch) thick for burgers and 1.25 cm (½ inch) for sliders.

- **Leave a dent:** To prevent the dreaded "burger bubble," gently make an indentation in the middle of each patty with your thumb or a spoon.

PERFECT SPICING

Burgers can be as simple as ground meat seasoned with a sprinkle of salt and a few grinds of black pepper or be filled with a dozen Indian spices.

No matter what you are – or aren't – putting in your burger, don't salt the formed patties until just before you put them on the heat. Salting too early will leave you with a dry burger since salt draws moisture from the meat.

PERFECT EXECUTION

Whether you cook over flames, in a skillet, or under the broiler, what you don't do can be the difference between a delicious, juicy burger and a bun full of disappointment.

- **Don't fiddle:** Once you've placed your patty on the cooking surface, leave it alone to form a crust. This crust adds flavour and forms a barrier to help keep moisture inside. Flip at the half-way point only. It's a burger, not a coin toss.

- **Don't flatten:** For most of us it's almost second nature to flatten the burger with the spatula to "help things along." Unfortunately, pressing doesn't speed up cooking. However, it does speed up drying by forcing the juices out of the patty.

- **Don't poke and prod:** If you pull the patty apart to check for doneness, you're going to break the burger and release juices. Instead, use a meat thermometer.

Insert it into the centre of the patty from the side, not the top, to ensure a more accurate reading. Cook the burger until the internal temperature reaches the "safe zone."

For ground beef, pork, veal and lamb, the internal temperature should be 71°C (160°F). For ground chicken and turkey, the internal temperature is 74°C (165°F).

- **Don't rush:** Once cooked, place the patties on a clean cutting board or platter to rest for five minutes.

Resting gives the proteins time to relax and allows the juices to redistribute evenly within the burger. The result is a moist burger, not a soggy bun.



GREEK CHICKEN SLIDERS

Makes 12 sliders or six burgers

Loosely based on spanakopita, these tiny burgers deliver lots of flavour. To keep with the Greek theme, top with slices of cucumber and a dollop of garlic-kissed tzatziki.

30 ml (2 tablespoons) vegetable oil, divided

1 onion, finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 300 g packaged chopped frozen spinach, defrosted and drained

125 g (4 ounces) feta, crumbled

30 ml (2 tablespoons) finely chopped fresh dill

15 ml (1 tablespoon) finely chopped fresh mint

15 ml (1 tablespoon) finely grated lemon zest

500 g (1 pound) ground chicken

1 large egg

TOPPING

Cucumber slices

Tzatziki

1. Heat 15 ml (1 tablespoon) oil in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the onion until soft, about five minutes. Add the garlic and cook one more minute. Set aside to cool.

2. Squeeze all the moisture out of the drained spinach using paper towels. It should be reduced to about the size of a tennis ball. Crumble spinach into a large bowl.

3. Add the onion mixture, feta, dill, mint, and lemon zest to the spinach. Mix to combine.

4. Break the ground chicken into large pieces, add to spinach mixture along with the egg. Stir to combine.

5. Divide mixture into equal portions – six for large burgers or 12 for sliders – roll into balls without compressing.

Gently flatten to between 2 cm to 2.5 cm (3/4 inch and 1 inch) for burgers and 1.25 cm to 2 cm (1/2 inch to 3/4 inch) for sliders. Using your thumb or a spoon, create an indentation in the centre of the burger. Refrigerate until ready to cook.

6. Heat 15 mL (1 tablespoon) oil in non-stick skillet over medium heat. Cook patties until internal temperature reaches 74°C (165°F), about five minutes per side for large patties or three minutes a side for sliders, flipping once. Transfer to a platter and allow to rest five minutes before placing on bun and topping with cucumber slices and tzatziki.

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Barbecue Season

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BLENDED MUSHROOM BURGERS

Makes six burgers

Finely chopped mushrooms are an easy and inexpensive way to extend your burger budget. Not only do they add umami (a meaty deliciousness), they up moisture content and nutrition without intruding on the flavour. The standard ratio is one part mushroom to two parts beef.

Don't bother removing the stems, just wipe the mushroom tops with a damp paper towel, quarter, and then chop in the food processor.

250 g (½ pound) mushrooms, quartered

1 small onion, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed

500 g (1 pound) lean ground beef
15 ml (1 tablespoon) Worcestershire sauce

1 large egg

Fine sea salt

1. In a food processor fitted with a blade, chop the mushrooms in two-second pulses until they resemble couscous.

2. In a non-stick skillet, over medium-high heat, cook the mushrooms and onions until they are soft and their moisture is gone, about six to eight minutes. Add the garlic and cook one more minute. Set aside to cool.

3. In a large bowl, combine the beef, mushroom mixture, Worcestershire sauce and egg until blended. Divide mixture into six equal portions, form

into balls, being careful not to compact the mixture. Gently flatten to between 2 cm to 2.5 cm (¾ inch and 1 inch). Using your thumb or a spoon, create an indentation in the centre of the burger. Refrigerate until ready to cook.

4. Lightly salt the burgers on both sides just before cooking. On the stovetop using a skillet over medium-high heat, or over a barbecue grill using direct flame, cook burgers until internal temperature reaches 71°C (160°F), about five minutes per side, flipping once. Transfer patties to a platter and allow to rest five minutes before placing on bun and garnishing with desired toppings.

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes



Stemmler's
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Stemmler's Mother's Day

Layered Chicken, Chevre & Egg Napoleon with Tomato Coulis

Stemmler's Father's Day

Sunny Egg, Rosti & Flat Steak Napoleon with Anchovy Butter

Serves 1-2 People (1 hr prep/ 30 min cook time)

Ingredients

- 1 cup Roasted Chicken Breast or Thigh from Stemmler's (slice or shred it)
- 4 Whole Eggs (available at Stemmler's)
- ¼ cup Flour
- 1 Shallot (thinly sliced)
- 1 Large Kale Leaf (de-rib the leaf)
- 2 oz Port
- ¼ cup Local Goats Cheese (available at Stemmler's)
- ¼ cup Olive Tapenade
- ½ cup Tomato/Roasted Red Pepper Sauce
- 1 tbsp Fresh Basil (chopped)
- 1 tbsp Butter
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Instructions:

1. For mom, saute the shallots in a hot pan with melted butter and season with salt. After 1 minute, add port then kale. Stir and cook 1 more minute then set aside. Crack 4 eggs into a bowl and whisk in some salt, pepper, 2 tbsp of the tomato sauce and the flour. Let rest for a couple minutes. Add butter in a hot pan then ladle enough egg just to let it spread like a thick crepe. Cook until it loosens off the pan to flip. Repeat 3 more times or until you use up all the egg mixture. Set aside and keep warm.
2. Assemble the Napoleons by spreading some of the tapenade on the first layer of egg. Along with some chicken and goats cheese. On the second layer, add shallots and kale. On the third layer, do the same as the first one. Top it with the last egg and drizzle some hot sauce over it. Garnish with goats cheese & basil leaves. Serve warm.
3. For dad, take the steak and place between two pieces of saran wrap. Pound out the meat to tenderize it as well as to make it thinner. Cut into 4 pieces and sprinkle the steaks with the salt and spices. Cook the pork jowl. Next, place butter, tarragon, anchovies and one roasted garlic clove in a food processor and blend until smooth (can be done earlier and kept in fridge). Set aside. Add the shallots to the same bacon pan and after a minute, toss in the port and kale. After another minute, set aside then add mushrooms to the same pan to cook for 2 minutes per side then remove. Add some butter to the hot pan. Sear off the steaks (about 2 minutes each side). Set aside and keep warm with all the other ingredients. To make the rosti, shred the potato and the cheese into a bowl. Season with salt/pepper and green onion. Add one egg to bind it then squeeze out the liquid. Add a little more butter and sear off the rosti for 3 min per side until golden brown. Break open one more egg and let it cook to sunny side with seasoning.
4. Begin assembly. Lay one piece of the steak on top of the rosti. Top it with 2 pieces of the jowl bacon, a sprinkle of cheese and some of the mushrooms. Add another piece of meat then top with shallots and kale. Place another steak on top and then add the rest of the bacon, cheese and mushrooms. Finish with the last piece of meat then add the anchovy butter and finally the sunny side egg. Garnish and serve warm. Enjoy



For more information on Chef Scott Yates please visit : chefscottcooks.com

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