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Five fabulous flips
By Jackie Burrell

Contra Costa Times

Restaurant chefs have elevated the hamburger to a gourmet dish and there is no reason you can't do the same when grilling at home with offerings like this Sunday supper burger. (Mark DuFrene/Contra Costa Times/MCT)

Summer may be drawing to a close but there's still plenty of time to grill your meal. You could just slap a slab on the grill. But, instead, why not try to boost the lowly burger to new and gourmet heights? We turned to some well-regarded chefs for their ideas for Labor Day burger grilling.

One suggests banishing those supermarket buns in favor of artisan breads. Others get creative about the burger itself: ground chuck is joined by rock shrimp, chicken and lamb. And the condiments? Cilantro-laced pestos, mango salsas and a Greek-style tzatziki.

The chefs we turned to include Hubert Keller, whose inventive Burger Bar at Las Vegas' Mandalay Bay has raised the bar for barbecue. His new book, "Burger Bar," offers ideas ranging from Brazilian rock shrimp burgers to ostrich, buffalo and pesto-laced beef.

Google's former executive chef has a new book out, too. In Charlie Ayers' "Food 2.0," you'll find lamb burgers topped with tzatziki and marinated onions.

We rounded out our Five Fabulous Burgers list with a slider variation from Cindy Pawlcyn's new "Appetizers," which features the small plates Pawlcyn made famous at San Francisco's Fog City Diner and Napa's Mustards Grill.

And John Torode, host of the BBC-TV series "Masterchef," uses oyster sauce as the secret ingredient in one of his burgers in his new book, "Beef and Other Bovine Matters.

Cilantro Pesto Beef Burger

Time-pressed cooks may substitute a purchased basil pesto and sauteed onions, says Keller.

2 lbs. ground chuck, chilled

Sea salt and black pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 slices provolone cheese

4 ciabatta buns

1 large tomato, sliced

Large handful arugula

Cilantro arugula pesto:

1 bunch fresh cilantro, stemmed

12 roasted, salted macadamia nuts

1 or 2 garlic cloves, to taste

2 cups packed arugula

1 teaspoon fresh lime juice

1/3teaspoon grated lime zest

6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1/4cup grated Pecorino Romano

Grilled onion steaks:

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

2 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 large Vidalia or Maui onion, peeled and cut into four thick slices

4 to 6 soaked bamboo skewers

For the pesto: Finely chop the nuts and garlic in a food processor. Add the cilantro, arugula, lime juice and zest and process to coarse puree. With the machine running, add the olive oil in a thin stream and process until smooth. Pulse in the cheese and season to taste. The pesto will keep, chilled, up to two days.

In a bowl, mix the meat, 1/4cup of the pesto and 1 1/2 teaspoons pepper. Divide the meat into four evenly sized patties and chill several hours or overnight.

Preheat the barbecue for the onions. Whisk together the oil, mustard, honey and vinegar, and set aside. Thread one or two skewers through each onion slice. Brush the onions with the oil mixture and season with salt and pepper, then grill them for 15 minutes, flipping several times as they caramelize.

Season the meat on both sides with salt and pepper, and grill for 7 to 10 minutes to desired doneness. For the last minute or two of cooking, drape a slice of cheese over each burger to melt. To serve, spread the bun bottoms with pesto. Top with tomato and arugula. Add the patties and then a grilled onion. Makes 4 servings.

From "Burger Bar" by Hubert Keller

The Wichita Eagle—09/02/09

The Great Burger

3 lbs. ground chuck

1 to 2 large red onions, diced

Large handful of fresh flat leaf parsley, chopped

2 tablespoons oyster sauce

2 tablespoons ketchup

1 egg yolk

Mix the beef, onions and parsley together. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well.

Divide into six equal portions and roll each one into a large ball. Refrigerate for at least one hour.

Preheat the barbecue for 10 minutes. Place burgers on grill and cook a few minutes on each side over high heat, just until starting to brown. Then move the burgers to the side, where it is slightly cooler, to finish cooking. Makes 6 servings.

From "Beef," by John Torode.

The Wichita Eagle—09/02/09

Lamb Burgers With Tzatziki

1 lb. ground lamb

1 teaspoon minced garlic

1/2teaspoon ground cloves

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Sea salt and ground pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 artisan style hard rolls

4 handfuls baby spinach leaves

Marinated onions:

1/2red onion, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

Tzatziki sauce:

2-inch piece English cucumber, coarsely grated

1/4cup plain yogurt

1/4teaspoon minced garlic

2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

Mix the lamb, garlic, cloves, cumin and plenty of ground black pepper until well combined. Shape into four burgers. Chill until ready to cook.

Mix the red onion with the vinegar and sugar. Let marinate while you prepare the tzatziki sauce.

Squeeze the cucumber to remove excess moisture, then mix with the yogurt, garlic, mint and a little salt and pepper. Chill.

Sprinkle the burgers with a little salt and brush with olive oil. Grill until cooked through, 4-5 minutes per side.

Split the rolls and layer on the baby spinach leaves, burger, tzatziki sauce and the drained, marinated onions. Makes 4 servings.

From "Food 2.0," by Charlie Ayers.

The Wichita Eagle—09/02/09

Brazilian Rock Shrimp Burger

This can also be made with ground chicken or turkey.

1/3-inch piece peeled fresh ginger

1 garlic clove

2 tablespoons plus 1 1/2 teaspoons unsweetened coconut milk

Sea salt and black pepper

1 1/2 lbs. rock shrimp, chilled

1 tablespoon chopped, fresh cilantro

2 tablespoons olive oil

8 slices brioche bread or buns

1/4cup mayonnaise

4-8 slices ripe tomato

2 handfuls salad mix

Avocado-Mango Salsa:

1 ripe but firm avocado, peeled and diced

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2ripe mango, peeled and diced

3 tablespoons diced red onion

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

2 tablespoons diced jicama or water chestnuts, fresh or canned

2 tablespoons red bell pepper, diced

1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

1 small garlic clove, minced

In a food processor, finely chop the ginger and garlic. Add the coconut milk, 2 teaspoons salt, 1/2teaspoon pepper, shrimp and cilantro and pulse until coarsely ground.

Wet hands, then shape the shrimp mixture into four evenly sized patties, about 1-inch thick. Cover and chill for 30 minutes to allow the flavors to develop.

Mix the salsa ingredients gently. Add salt and pepper to taste. Chill.

When ready to cook, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large, nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Brush the burgers on both sides with oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Cook until golden brown, 6-8 minutes.

Toast the bread. Brush with mayonnaise, and layer on the tomatoes, greens and patties. Add a little mango salsa and cover with remaining bread. Makes 4 servings.

From "Burger Bar," by Hubert Keller

The Wichita Eagle—00/02/09

Sunday Supper Burgers

Dressing:

1/2cup mayonnaise

1/4cup pickle relish

2-3 tablespoons ketchup

3-4 drops Tabasco

1 drop Worcestershire

1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 tablespoon cognac

Burgers:

2 strips bacon, cut in 1-inch pieces

1 onion, thinly sliced

1 lb. ground beef

Sea salt and black pepper

1/2cup grated sharp Cheddar

6 small brioche or slider buns

1 cup arugula

1 tablespoon minced green onions

Mix the dressing ingredients, and set aside. Cook the bacon until crisp. Form the beef into six or more small patties. Season with salt and pepper, and grill them over high heat, a few minutes per side. Top with the grated cheese.

Spread the bottom of each bun with dressing. Top with the arugula, the patty, crisp bacon and minced green onions. Cover with the tops of the buns and serve. Makes 3-4 servings

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