

Build your own burger system

There are so many ways to make a dull burger delicious! Free yourself and have fun experimenting with fillings and flavourings. Have a build-your-own-burger party and offer different options for your family or friends. Check out the *bonus* recipe on page 2 for garlic-infused marinated feta cheese!

cheat sheet

Source quality ground meat. Mix breadcrumbs with wet ingredients, then mix everything. Add more breadcrumbs if mixture is too moist.

Cook on 350°-400°F BBQ (or medium-high oven, pan or griddle) or until cooked through (5-10 minutes). Serve with your favourite toppings for a build-your-own-burger party!

tips

- First, food safety: Please see the [Government of Canada Healthy Canadians website](#) for more information about general food safety and safe internal temperatures when cooking.
- If you love your butcher's cuts, just season your beef with salt and pepper! That may be all you need to put in your patty but try our suggested ingredients if you like more flavours in your burger.

mixing burgers

- Place your choice of burger meat in a large bowl. Next to the meat, add egg, breadcrumbs and milk. Mix the breadcrumbs with the liquid to soften.
- Optional: Add chopped garlic, onion, spices and herbs to taste. Be careful adding salt to this recipe, as many store-bought toppings can be quite salty.
- The amount of breadcrumbs and seasonings is up to you. You can also

choose to cook your burger with no seasonings at all.

- Mix ingredients very well.
- Form into patties. As a rule of thumb, each 1 pound or ½ kg of meat can make 3 or 4 burgers: ¼ pounder = 4 burgers, ½ pounder = 3 burgers. Or double down and supersize your burgers!

cooking burgers

- Always lay burgers on the cooking surface in one even layer without touching.
- Cook burgers either on the BBQ, in the oven, in a frypan or on a griddle.
- Preheat the cooking surface to medium-high heat or 350°-400°F (175°-205°C) so that the burgers sear, which means the high heat caramelizes the exterior to a nice, tasty, golden brown crust and gives them that distinctive, rich, roasted flavour.
- Cook the burgers until they have a nice light golden crust (not a dark, hard crust) on one side and lift easily from the cooking surface without sticking (approximately 5-10 minutes, depending on your heat source and burger size). If the burgers stick, let them cook longer; eventually, they will lift easily. Flip and sear the other side until golden brown and not sticking (a few minutes).
- You can choose to turn the heat down now to finish the cooking process. This

Serves: 6-8 people

Yields: 6-8 burgers

Equipment: BBQ, oven or griddle, heat-proof large cooking spatula for flipping

ingredients

- 2 pounds or 1 kilogram of ground meat—try chicken, turkey, beef, bison or lamb (lean is less juicy)
- 1 or 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- ⅓-½ cup fresh, unseasoned bread crumbs
- 2-4 tablespoons milk
- 2-3 tablespoons finely chopped onion, garlic, garlic scapes, shallots or leeks to taste
- 1-2 teaspoons dried Italian seasoning blend or 2-4 tablespoons of your favourite fresh herbs
- salt and pepper to taste
- 6-8 burger buns (sized to your burger's expected cooked size)
- assorted burger toppings

chef secret

gluten-free burgers • Check out gluten-free bun recipes at the cookbook store or purchase buns from local, gluten-free bakeries. Instead of wheat crumbs in the burger mix, try rice crumbs (available in grocery and health-food stores). Read labels for hidden gluten.

protein alternatives • Try making burgers with ground fish like tuna, salmon or mild white-fleshed fish.

requires you to play it by ear and make judgements based on the internal temperature and the look, feel and smell of the burger. Aim to cook the inside until perfectly done. That means you want the burger to be cooked yet juicy, with clear (not reddish) juices flowing out of the burger meat, not overcooked and dry. Follow safe internal temperature guidelines but trust your eyes and sense of smell too. It's a good idea to have one test burger that you can slice into. Total cooking time could range from 10 to 30 minutes depending on your heat source, the heat of the day, burger size, how long you preheated your BBQ and so on. Remember: done is done, not overdone!!!

servicing your burgers, buns, toppings and side dishes

- As you ready the table and the guests: Make sure that warm items like burgers and buns keep warm and cold items like mayonnaise and potato salad keep cool. Have serving spoons for toppings, big plates and lots of serviettes ready for decadent, messy masterpieces.
- There are so many toppings for burgers besides ketchup! Try sautéed mushroom slices, caramelized onion slices, roasted assorted vegetables, grilled rapini or asparagus stalks. Add in assorted hard or soft cheeses, chopped fresh cucumber, assorted leaves and fresh herbs, sliced fresh tomatoes, marinated vegetables, sauerkraut, sweet or dill pickles or various styles of bacon. Sauce it up with farmer's market relishes, homemade salsas, hot sauces and hot peppers, flavoured mayonnaises and dips like tzatziki or aioli, cooked tomato sauce, chili sauce, BBQ sauces, homemade pestos, mustards, guacamole or gravy.
- Do not overlook the quality and style of the bun! Select buns with a nice taste, texture and size that are an ideal match for the delicious and sloppy ingredients inside. You can choose to lightly toast or not toast your bun. There are any number of bun choices to serve with your burger from soft and chewy to toasted and crunchy. Serve and


assortment for a special meal, like classic white burger buns, rolls (sourdough, pumpernickel, sesame seed, whole wheat, ciabatta or brioche), thick slices of focaccia bread, naan or pita breads and gluten-free buns. Try rubbing your rolls with fresh garlic for a rich garlic scent and taste.

- Classic side dishes include french fries, coleslaw, potato salad or potato chips but remember approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of your dinner plate should contain a colourful variety of vegetables. Some of the side dishes I like to serve are grilled vegetables, sautéed vegetables, raw vegetable slaws with light vinegar dressings, green salad leaves with fresh fruits in season and homemade salad dressings, roasted wedges of Yukon Gold and sweet potatoes and oven-roasted hand-cut fries.

try meatballs instead of patties

- This burger recipe makes excellent meatballs. Roll small meatball shapes by hand instead of forming patties or form them with spoons from the raw burger mixture. Bake or pan-fry them until cooked through (cut open a tester meatball to be sure). Or place raw meatballs in simmering tomato sauce and cook to done for an extra flavourful sauce with one-pot cleanup.

 Explore your local farms and markets for interesting, inspiring, fresh ingredients to add to your burger mixture or as toppings.

 Variety in the diet is always a good choice, and adding easy-on-the-eyes, colourful options is a goodness guarantee for your next burger.

 Have any questions after reading this? [Get answers here.](#)

veggie sandwich alternative •

Stack up your vegetables and sauces with cheese, seasoned cooked beans, nuts like whole pine nuts, ground almonds or ground hazelnuts.

fresh herbs to try • Herbs like rosemary, basil, thyme, oregano, chives, dill, mint, parsley and cilantro, to name a few, are all delicious chopped and mixed in burgers. Taste-test herbs you aren't familiar with and experiment.

time-saver • Double or triple the burger recipe to make extra for a future time-crunch. Freeze patties raw or cooked.

bonus chef secrets

Marinated Feta Cheese •

Makes one large portion

- 1 medium block (400 grams or 3 cups) sheep or goat feta cheese, chopped into small cubes
- 3 cups olive oil
- 1 small bunch (40 grams or 1 cup) chopped fresh basil leaves
- 2 large cloves garlic, chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons whole pink peppercorns (optional)
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary or more to taste
- 1-2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves or more to taste

Equipment: Medium jar with a lid

- Combine all ingredients in a container. Stir and leave to marinate for a few hours in the fridge. Fold 1 tablespoon of cheese mixture into the centre of each raw burger patty, pile this feta mixture on top of cooked burgers or mix in your salads, salad dressings and side dishes. Keeps for two weeks in the fridge if the cheeses and herbs are covered with oil to preserve freshness.