

Frugal Foodie Friday: Easy Homemade Veggie Burgers

One of my biggest frustrations with dairy-free living used to be veggie burgers. Either they had some sneaky cheese hidden within or were soy burgers attempting to mimic the beefy versions. I don't know about you, but I eat veggie burgers for the veggie burger experience. If I wanted a hamburger or turkey burger, then that is what I would order.

Thankfully, companies like Amy's began inching into the very veggie market with vegan options that were (and are) mighty tasty. But purchasing pre-packaged foods isn't always the most economical solution. Plus, experimenting with your own veggie burgers at home can yield so many different varieties, textures, and flavor sensations. Personally, I have just touched upon the veggie burger potential, but here are a couple recipes, one that I have personally enjoyed, plus a new vegan burger from Chef Levana ...

One of the big draws for veggie burgers is summer grilling. Keep in mind many homemade veggie burgers may be too soft to simply fire on the grill. Those that you purchase have typically been frozen and/or pre-baked. If you really want to enjoy that outdoor bbq experience, don't be afraid to "cheat" like the companies do. Pre-baking the burgers until they are almost done and/or pouring the batter out and freezing it, should firm up your burger enough to keep it from falling through the slats. In general, cooked veggie burgers freeze very well, and can be reheated in the oven or toaster oven with ease. Adding an egg will also up the binding power, but to accomodate more diets, we tested these vegan and egg-free ...

Chicago Diner Mushroom Burgers

Adapted from Recipezaar and The Non-Dairy Queen

This recipe is Vegan, Nut-Free, Soy-free, and of course Dairy-Free. It is also very low in fat and has a wonderful flavor. The texture ends up firm on the outside, and a bit softer in the middle, much like an Amy's Bistro Burger.

- 1 cup diced roasted red peppers or 3 stalks celery, diced
- 1 cup diced onion
- 1/4 cup soy sauce or tamari
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- salt to taste (optional, but a do recommend a wee bit)
- 3 cups quick or rolled oats
- 4 cups diced mushrooms (portobello, cremini, button, or a combination)
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour

Bring 4 cups water, roasted red peppers or celery, onion, soy sauce, onion powder, garlic powder, pepper, and salt to a boil in a pot over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium and simmer 5 minutes. Stir in the oats, mushrooms, and flour and cook 5 minutes more. Transfer to a bowl and chill.

Preheat oven to 350°F; coat a baking sheet with cooking spray or line it with a silpat. Shape mixture into patties and bake on prepared baking sheet for 15 minutes. Flip and bake 10 more minutes. Cool.

Heat grill to medium-high. place foil on grill and coat with cooking spray. Grill burgers on foil for 7 minutes per side.

Yields 8 burgers

Levana's Very Veggie Burgers with optional Red Pepper Sauce

Levana Kirschenbaum is the author of the great cookbook, *Levana Cooks Dairy-Free!*

This recipe is Vegan, Nut-Free, Soy-free, optionally Gluten-Free, and of course Dairy-Free (but be sure to choose your breadcrumbs wisely depending on your free-from needs!).

- 1 medium onion, quartered
- 1 small bunch parsley
- 3 large cloves garlic
- 1/3 cup basil leaves, packed
- 1 10 ounce box frozen chopped spinach, squeezed dry
- 1 large carrot, grated fine
- 1 large zucchini, grated fine
- 1 cup fresh bread crumbs, a little more if needed to make a firm mixture [use gluten-free breadcrumbs for gf]

- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Pinch nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Finely grind the onion, parsley, garlic and basil in food processor. Transfer the ground mixture to a bowl, add all remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly. Form a dozen patties, and place them on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake about 20 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature, alone or with red pepper sauce (recipe follows) or other good sauce of your choice.

Red Pepper Sauce:

- 3 red peppers, cored out, cut in large chunks
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons green peppercorns in brine, drained (settle for ground pepper)
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup basil leaves, packed
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste

Process all ingredients till smooth. Store in a glass jar in the refrigerator.