Crank up the moisture for a better turkey burger
- Turkey Burgers with Goat Cheese and Grilled Peaches -

By: Melissa d'Arabian June 15, 2015

The turkey burger has become the healthy default of grilling season. And that's really not a bad call.

That's because a 90 percent lean turkey burger (4 ounces) has only about 160 calories, yet still offers an impressive 20 grams of protein and just 9 grams of fat. Just don't be tempted to buy leaner ground turkey. It may be fine in other recipes, but when making burgers, anything leaner than 10 percent fat will produce tough, dry patties.

So for chili or taco night, feel free to grab that 93 percent or 96 percent ground turkey. There's enough sauce to make up the difference. But burgers need some fat for flavor, moisture and tenderness. Even 90 percent ground turkey requires some careful handling in order to ensure a juicy, tasty burger. I have two tricks that are game-changers for your turkey burgers.
First, use an instant-read thermometer. You can get one for under $10 almost anywhere. This is money well spent, and not just for burgers. Unless you are very experienced with meat, use the thermometer to take the guesswork out of grilling. It makes it easy to know exactly when the meat has hit the desired temperature.

A turkey burger needs to cook to 165 F, but don't let it go one degree above that! In fact, I take mine off the grill a degree or two early because meat continues to cook a bit after it comes off the heat.
Second, flavor the burger — both in the patty and with a topping. Turkey burgers are almost always better when they have a little flavoring in the meat. And then you also want to top them with something to add flavor and moisture, such as marinated summer peaches and goat cheese, which I stretched with some high-protein, low-fat Greek yogurt.

Turkey Burgers With Goat Cheese and Grilled Peaches
1 1/4 pounds 90 percent lean ground turkey
1 tablespoon hot sauce
1 medium shallot, minced, divided
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon turmeric
Kosher salt and ground black pepper

3 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme, divided
1 1/2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar or white wine vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 large peaches, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds
4-ounce log fresh goat cheese
1/2 cup low-fat plain Greek yogurt
Juice and zest of 1/2 lemon
Vegetable oil, for brushing burgers
4 burger buns
1 cup arugula (optional)

In a large bowl, mix the ground turkey, hot sauce, half of the shallot, the cumin, turmeric and a generous pinch each of salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes or up to 24 hours.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the remaining shallot, 2 teaspoons of the thyme, the vinegar and olive oil. Add the peach slices and toss gently to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 15 minutes to an hour.

In a small bowl, mix the remaining 1 teaspoon of thyme, the goat cheese, yogurt and the lemon zest and juice until smooth. Refrigerate. Can be made up to 24 hours in advance.

When ready to cook, heat a grill or large grill pan to medium-high. Divide the ground turkey mixture into quarters and form each into a patty. Use your thumbs to press an indentation into the center of each patty. Brush each patty with vegetable oil, then season on both sides with salt and pepper. Grill the burgers for about 4 minutes per side, or until cooked to 165 F at the center.

While the burgers are cooking, add the peach slices to the grill and cook for 2 to 3 minutes per side. Brush the cut sides of each bun with vegetable oil and grill for about 30 seconds per side. To assemble, set a burger on top of each bun bottom, then top with 2 tablespoons of goat cheese sauce, 2 to 3 grilled peach slices, and arugula, if using.

Per serving: 550 calories; 260 g fat (30 g saturated fat; 47 percent calories from fat); 33 g carbohydrates; 12 g sugar; 120 mg cholesterol; 660 mg sodium; 39 g protein; 3 g fiber.

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