

At least four times a year, we do a "formal" food tasting to help us change the printed menu in accordance with the seasons. It is always a stressful time for both the chef and I. One of our former chefs, Louise Branch, invented these burgers for one of her tastings. When it was added to the menu, her husband, Phillip Claypool, claimed it was all his idea.

This is great for vegetarians. It looks just like a burger, although it's quite a bit more tender, and the combination of meaty sautéed mushrooms held together with cream cheese is very satisfying both in richness and color. You can substitute whatever mushrooms are available in your area at the time. A small amount of reconstituted dried mushrooms will add interest and flavor, if all you can get are domestic button mushrooms. Be sure to use fresh soft buns, or the burger will squirt out the edges at the first bite. I also like these on thick slices of toasted brioche (a rich egg bread), served open-faced, with the

APPLE-JICAMA SLAW

- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 1 1/4 teaspoons cumin seeds, toasted and ground
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 or 2 jalapeño chiles, seeded and minced
- 2 or 3 scallions, cut on the diagonal
- 2 cups battonne-cut apples
- 2 cups peeled and battonne-cut jicama

- 2 pounds mixed fresh portobello, shiitake, and cremini mushrooms, carefully cleaned
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 to 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground coarse black pepper, plus more to taste
- Several gratings of nutmeg
- 1 head roasted garlic (page 5)
- 2 tablespoons cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons grated Asiago cheese
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 3 to 6 tablespoons toasted bread crumbs
- 6 slices red onion, cut 1/4 inch thick

- 5 tender-cruste**d** burger buns, or 5 thick slices brioche or challah
- 3/4 cup Roasted Garlic Aioli (page 194)
- 2 tablespoons Basil Pesto (page 194) or Mint-Tarragon Pesto (page 204)
- 2 to 3 cups arugula, tough stems removed, washed, torn into pieces if large, and spun dry
- Turmeric Pickles (page 200) or store-bought bread-and-butter pickles

To make the slaw, combine the vinegar, cumin, salt, and pepper in a small bowl, whisking until the salt has dissolved. Gradually whisk in the oil, and continue to whisk until fully emulsified. Stir in the jalapeños and scallions. Prepare the apples and dress them lightly so they don't darken. Next, mix in the jicama and add additional dressing as needed.

You can use the stems of all the mushrooms, except for the shiitakes, which are too tough. Those you can cut off and use in stocks. Finely chop one-fourth of the mushrooms in a food processor or by hand. Thinly slice the remaining mushrooms. (The combination of chopped and sliced mushrooms gives the burger the appearance and feel of a real burger.)

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onion on the bottom and the arugula on the top.

The slaw is especially good served alongside sandwiches that are fairly rich. It's also quite refreshing on its own, or served on a bed of lightly dressed arugula or radicchio. The jicama and apples are cool and crunchy. Use a crisp, sweet eating apple, such as a Braeburn or McIntosh. No need to peel them. We always cut the jicama and apples in longish sticks that resemble french fries so we can say that our mushroom "burger" comes with "fries."

Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and 1½ teaspoons of the butter in a very large sauté pan until hot and almost brown. Add half of the mushrooms, spreading them out as thinly as possible, and cook for about 5 minutes, until golden brown. (Their juices will need to be released and evaporated before they will brown.) Season with the 1 teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and nutmeg. Transfer the mushrooms to a bowl and repeat with the other half of the mushrooms, the remaining olive oil, and 1½ teaspoons butter. Chill uncovered.

Squeeze the pulp from the cloves of roasted garlic and chop it. When the mushrooms are cool, add the garlic, cream cheese, Asiago cheese, mustard, parsley, and 3 tablespoons of the bread crumbs, and mix well. Add more bread crumbs if needed to hold the mixture together. Portion out the mixture into 5 patties (you could use an ice cream scoop for easier measuring).

Heat the remaining 2 or 3 tablespoons of butter over medium to medium-high heat in a nonstick skillet or on a griddle. When it is hot and bubbly and before it begins to brown, season the patties with the salt and pepper, add to the pan, and gently sauté until golden brown on the first side. Turn the patties and cook on the other side until brown and hot through. It should take 4 to 5 minutes in all. Sauté the onion slices alongside the mushroom patties until golden and tender. Meanwhile, toast the buns and combine the aioli with the pesto and mix well.

To make the sandwiches, spread the buns with the aioli-pesto mixture. Place the arugula and onions on the bottoms, followed by the mushroom burgers, and then the tops. Serve with the pickles and the slaw.