



The best thing at the cookout isn't the burger

Happy Fourth from the team at Diet ID. The grill is the whole event this year, and some of the best things to put on it come from the produce aisle, not the meat case. This isn't about giving anything up; it's about loading your plate with food so good that your cousin asks for the recipes.

Quick Grill Ideas

Grilled watermelon steaks are the surprise hit of the spread. Cut thick slabs about an inch wide, salt them, and grill 2 to 3 minutes a side until caramelized at the edges, then finish with lime and chili or a drizzle of balsamic.

For something between the bun, you have more options than the meat counter suggests: a whole-food veggie burger, a thick cauliflower steak, grilled halloumi, or a marinated portobello cap that soaks up a marinade and cooks in about ten minutes. Full portobello recipe below.

Tofu and tempeh skewers are worth the little bit of effort. Press extra-firm tofu, cube it, toss with oil, tamari, garlic, and smoked paprika, thread onto skewers with peppers and onions, and grill until charred at the corners.

Corn needs almost nothing. Grill it in the husk or straight over the flame until blistered, then roll it in lime, chili powder, and a little salt for instant elote energy.

Quick Side Ideas

The sides are where a cookout is won or lost, and a few smart swaps turn the classics into a nutritional upgrade without anyone missing the mayo.

Potato salad is better, and safer in the heat, when you skip the mayo for a tangy dressing of extra virgin olive oil, lemon, and spices. Full recipe below.

Bean salad is a welcome staple (unless it's the sad canned three-bean relic with the string beans and sugary dressing). A mix of chickpeas and white beans with crunchy vegetables and a sharp lemon dressing is fresh, high in fiber, and better after a day in the fridge.

A red, white, and blue fruit platter needs no food coloring when nature already made the colors. Pile on strawberries and raspberries, a heap of blueberries, and bananas, coconut flakes, or white nectarines for the white.

Grilled peaches turn sweet and a little smoky, and they're wonderful over greens with red onion and a sharp vinaigrette.

A whole grain salad rounds out the table and travels well. Toss cooked farro, quinoa, or bulgur with chopped herbs, cucumbers, green onions, tomatoes, and lemon for a fresh, filling side that's easy to make in a big batch.

Marinated Grilled Portobello Burgers



Portobellos are the classic non-imposter veggie burger. They're rich and earthy on their own, and a short marinade turns them into the best thing in the bun. Make extra, since they vanish.

Ingredients: (serves 4)

- 4 large portobello caps, stems removed and gills scraped if you like
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons tamari or soy sauce
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- Black pepper
- 4 whole grain buns and your favorite fixings

Instructions:

1. Whisk the balsamic, extra virgin olive oil, tamari, garlic, smoked paprika, and a few grinds of pepper in a dish wide enough to hold the caps.
2. Add the portobellos and turn to coat, then let them sit 20 to 30 minutes, flipping once. They soak up the marinade like a sponge.
3. Heat the grill to medium-high. Grill the caps 4 to 5 minutes a side, brushing with any leftover marinade, until tender and well marked.
4. Pile onto buns with whatever you love, lettuce, tomato, grilled onions, avocado, a smear of mustard. Serve hot.

Turmeric Potato Salad



This is the tangy, light version, made with extra virgin olive oil and turmeric, two ingredients with real anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It only gets better as it sits, so make it ahead.

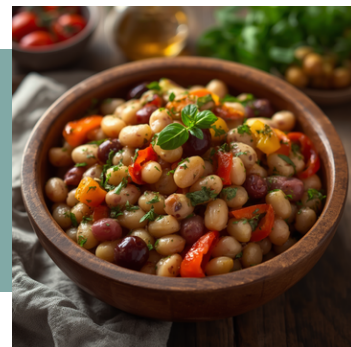
Ingredients: (serves 6)

- 4 medium potatoes, scrubbed and cut into bite-size chunks, skin on
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped small
- 1/2 cup celery, chopped small
- 1/2 small red or yellow onion, chopped small
- 1/2 cup parsley leaves, packed and chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- Pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon agave or honey (optional)

Instructions:

1. Whisk the balsamic, extra virgin olive oil, tamari, garlic, smoked paprika, and a few grinds of pepper in a dish wide enough to hold the caps.
2. Add the portobellos and turn to coat, then let them sit 20 to 30 minutes, flipping once. They soak up the marinade like a sponge.
3. Heat the grill to medium-high. Grill the caps 4 to 5 minutes a side, brushing with any leftover marinade, until tender and well marked.
4. Pile onto buns with whatever you love, lettuce, tomato, grilled onions, avocado, a smear of mustard. Serve hot.

Mediterranean Bean Salad



Make this one ahead without worrying about it losing flavor or texture.

Ingredients: (serves 6)

- 1 can (15 oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15 oz) cannellini or other white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 English cucumber, diced
- 1/2 red onion, finely diced
- 1 cup parsley, chopped
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, grated
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and black pepper
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta (optional)

Instructions:

1. Instructions:
2. Whisk the extra virgin olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, oregano, and a good pinch of salt and pepper in the bottom of a large bowl.
3. Add the chickpeas, white beans, tomatoes, cucumber, red onion, and parsley, and toss to coat.
4. Let it sit at least 15 minutes before serving so the flavors come together. Fold in the feta at the end if using. It keeps in the fridge for up to three days.