

Bison burgers may be best bet for backyard Fourth of July BBQ



Boursin Bison Burger

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

Burgers seem to be just the right fare for a Fourth of July barbecue. And, bison is my burger of choice, so whenever we make burgers at home, I always try to have bison on hand. It's a bit leaner than beef and the flavor is delicious. We have begun mixing Boursin Garlic & Fine Herbs cheese right in with the meat and it makes the burger super moist and flavorful. We also mix in a little bit of grated Gruyere cheese sometimes,

and that is especially yummy. You can also simply add a slice of your favorite cheese on top, or leave the extra cheese off all together, since you already have the Boursin mixed into the burger. Boursin is just a wonderful, creamy cheese and it's offered in several flavors, including Shallot & Chive, Cracked Black Pepper, Basil and Chive and a limited edition of Parsley & Lemon, any of which would be great in this burger. Most grocers carry at least one or two of

these flavors, so it should be easy to find.

Now, when it comes to grilling burgers, I don't know if you have this same problem, but sometimes the burger meat sticks to the grill, making it look kind of shredded and rough. Plus, you lose some of the meat to the grill. This usually only happens on the first side that you place down on the grill. The reason it doesn't happen on the second side, is because, due to the heat of the barbecue, the top half of the meat has a

chance to set up and therefore it's a little bit cooked before you flip it onto the grill. Well, my husband and sons came up with a clever and easy solution. They place the burger on a piece of foil (sprayed with cooking spray) before putting it on the grill. This allows the meat to set up from the heat before any of it is placed directly onto the grill. It's magic. We cook the first side for 5-6 minutes, and then flip the burger directly onto the grill for the second side to cook. Depending upon

how well done or rare you like your meat, the second side takes anywhere from 2-5 minutes, even with a slice of cheese on top.

If you haven't tried this method of cooking burgers, give it a shot. For us, the burgers come out perfectly every time. Happy Fourth of July to all of you!

For more information on Boursin Cheese: <https://www.boursin.com/>.

Boursin Bison Burgers

(Makes 3-4, depending how big you like your burger)

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. ground bison (can also use ground beef, turkey or lamb)
3-4 tablespoons Boursin cheese (we like Garlic & Fine Herbs or Shallot & Chive for this recipe)
3-4 tablespoons grated Gruyere cheese (or your favorite cheese)
1 teaspoon Johnny's Seasoning Salt (or your favorite seasoning salt)
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
3-4 thick slices of red onion (cooked separately on the grill)
1 tablespoon olive oil (for brushing both sides of the onion slices)
3-4 hamburger buns
All the fixings: pickles, mustard, ketchup, sliced avocado, sliced tomato, lettuce leaves

DIRECTIONS

Mix bison with Boursin, grated cheese, seasoning salt, and pepper until thoroughly integrated. Form into however many patties you usually make from one pound of meat. You can make these several hours ahead of time and store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator until you're ready to grill.

Heat the grill to medium.

Place each burger on an individual piece of foil that has been sprayed with cooking spray.

Place foil side on the grill and cover the barbecue. Cook for 5-6 minutes on the first side. Using hot mitts or a spatula, flip the burger from the foil directly onto the grill, now with second side of the burger facing down. If you're using sliced cheese on top, place the cheese on top of the burger and continue to cook over medium heat for another 2-5 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the burger is cooked to your satisfaction.

During the grilling process, place the thick onion slices on the top rack of the grill if you have one, or off to the sides if you don't. Cook them until done (we like them a bit al dente) and black stripes begin to form on the onions. Remove from the grill and keep warm.

Assemble the burger, grilled onions and all the fixing on the buns and dive in!

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Travel log

Bann at Oak Knoll brings Thailand to the Napa Valley



Sit poolside surrounded by mountain views.

Photos provided

By Fran Endicott Miller

It's an unusual combination, but somehow, it works – a Thai-themed boutique hotel, set smack in the middle of Napa Valley vineyards, surrounded by grapes and with Vaca Mountain views. Owned and operated by famed Thai chef Lalita Souksamlane of popular San Francisco restaurant OSHA Thai, Bann at Oak Knoll is an oasis of color and is an ideal spot for either a romantic getaway or a family escape.

The intimate, five room inn is a serene reflection of its country of inspiration, where

life is lived outdoors. Here as well, emphasis is placed on fresh air and sunshine, despite the ornate and inviting nature of each of the immense quarters, each of which the décor is based upon a different region of Thailand. Featuring rich textiles, low platform beds, and orchids – so many orchids – the rooms, and especially the bathrooms, are alluring. The deep, free-standing soaking tubs, beside which are placed bath salts and a fizzy ball, are especially irresistible, as are the plush and incredibly soft robes. A bottle of Chanel perfume adds an indulgent touch as does the plumeria-scented body lotion.

If it sounds romantic, it is.

But Bann also welcomes children, as evidenced by the two large floaties drifting in the pool – a unicorn and a duck. One of the rooms is especially geared toward families with two king size beds and two day beds.

Despite the ornate room décor, Bann is most about what's outside those beautiful rooms. Guests are greeted in an open-air pergola, lushly furnished with colorful Thai textiles. Outside of each room is a private dining table, poised toward the vineyard views, and at which afternoon tea and a leisurely three course breakfast are graciously served. Afternoon tea includes a choice of hot or cold teas, and both sweet and savory items, including fresh fruit from local K&J Orchards. Breakfast, served between 9 to 10:30 a.m., includes choice of coffee or tea, a basket of baked goods, more fresh fruit, and a main course choice of both American and Thai offerings. Each service is unrushed and unhurried. And anyone requiring an anytime snack can help themselves to chips and other kid-friendly goodies from the honor bar, where a Nespresso coffee maker stands ready to provide a caffeine kick.

Furthering the 'outdoor living' theme is the pool, deck, and hot tub, featuring unobstructed vineyard and mountain views. Bistro tables, chairs, and swings are surrounded by expansive, vineyard-adjacent, organic gardens from which Souksamlane sources ingredients for both Bann and OSHA Thai. The property brims with art and artifacts from Souksamlane's personal collection, such as pottery vessels, flowing fountains, and elephant carvings that will delight little ones. (Elephants are the national symbol of Thailand, ad-



Bann at Oak Knoll open-air pergola



Spacious bedrooms offer a serene space to relax.

mired for their strength, endurance, and intelligence.)

For those who continue to have travel trepidation, Bann is a perfect getaway – seating areas are naturally distanced, and with just a handful of guests present at any given time, no one will be angling

for pool seating. Bann may not be a substitute for a trip to Thailand, but it certainly feels like another world, one that well suits the Napa Valley.