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The Vietnamese Burger



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The Vietnamese Burger was inspired by the Cha Gio, a Vietnamese version of the egg roll, also commonly known as the summer roll, spring roll or imperial roll. I can actually go on and on about these various names, since there are so many of them out there confusing servers all over the world, but that's another story. This story is about my own version of the Great American Burger, a proud "Vietnamese-American" Burger that summarizes my style of cooking and where I come from. In a nutshell, it's a meaty cultural combo fused with lots of diverse California ingredients.

Born in Arkansas but growing up mostly in the San Francisco Bay Area, you can see where I got to creating the Vietnamese Burger. Don't think I was herding cows at a young age. I was too young to remember. However, I do remember grilling a lot at summer barbecues and always being in the kitchen helping my mother because I just loved to cook and eat. I also adored cooking when everyone else was asleep and I had the kitchen all to myself. This recipe is my own creation, among many that I've mastered through a lot of experimenting. Some traditional and some "Viet-Cali" Fusion, a term I hope to make popular in the culinary community. I've been inspired to learn Vietnamese cooking through my "health-freak" mother and her traditional, old-fashioned sister, but I have also incorporated my own style which I've developed just by living in California.



Back to the Vietnamese burger - which has a few secret ingredients. Let's start with the patty, my favorite part. A flattened meatball made from lean ground beef, pork, chicken, or turkey, it's seasoned with salt, pepper, and garlic. I also mix in fresh, fine cut garlic, lemongrass, white onions, mint, cilantro, and black fungus mushrooms. My first secret ingredient, the black fungus mushroom, may throw you off, but it's the tasty key to keeping the meat moist,

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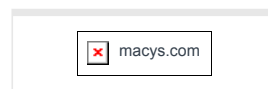
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especially if you're using turkey. You can find it at your local Asian market, dried up in a bag. You have to pre-soak it in water until it gets soft enough to chop. Make sure you also cut off the hard roots. They can sometimes end up in your burger and be hard as a rock, if you are not careful.

This next secret ingredient is what gives the burger a different texture and makes it wild and original. Boil some water and drop in some Vermicelli Bean Thread (Bun Tau) noodles for no more than a minute. It's a fine clear noodle that comes out at you when you bite into the burger. You can find it in most Asian markets. It also gives the center of the burger patty a creative look that will amaze guests at your barbeque party.



My third secret ingredient is the French Maggi Sauce, the one with no MSG of course. It's so tangy and good it's now available in your Asian food isles at Safeway and Albertson's. I personally prefer Maggi over Soy Sauce and you will too, once you try it. It also takes me back to the simple days when a bowl of rice and Maggi sauce was all I needed...and my only option too. If you don't care for Maggi then add some seasoned salt, or salt and pepper. One egg is optional to give the beef patty that extra hold. Put all that good stuff in a bowl and mix it up. Form the patties according to your bun or roll and grill them after the beef has had the chance to marinate. The longer it marinates, the better obviously. Of course you can fry, bake and even steam these bad boys. Top each grilled patty with some pickled carrots, cucumbers, mayonnaise, fresh Mint, and Cilantro for a true "Viet-style" burger or just have it your way and be your own Burger King.

The Vietnamese Burger Portions

- 2 lb Ground Beef, Pork, Chicken, or Turkey
- 1-2 cups chopped Black Fungus
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1/2 cup chopped Garlic
- 1/2 cup chopped Cilantro
- 1/2 cup chopped Lemongrass
- 1-2 cups Vermicelli Bean Thread Noodles
- 1/4 cup Maggi seasoning
- 1 egg (optional)
- Salt & Pepper
- Buns & Rolls of your choice
- Pickled Carrots and Daikon
- Cucumber
- Fresh Mint and Cilantro
- Your traditional ketchup, mustard, lettuce, & tomato work well too.

Makes 8-12 burgers.

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