

Halloumi and Aubergine Burgers

These burgers are so good they will impress all your guests, not just vegetarians. Halloumi and aubergine are charred on the grill, for a great balance of textures. The toppings here are extra special: smoky garlic and herb mayo, a fiery roasted chilli butter, and peppery rocket that brings a pop of freshness to every bite.

Serves 4

2 large aubergines
2 × 250g blocks of halloumi, each
halved horizontally
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Roasted chilli butter

3 long red chillies
100g butter, softened
½ tsp sweet smoked paprika
1 tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf
parsley

Garlic mayonnaise

1 large whole garlic bulb
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 sprigs of thyme, leaves picked
2 handfuls of hickory wood chips
(for the barbecue)
100ml mayonnaise
Juice of ½ lemon

To assemble

4 burger buns
60g rocket

1 First make the chilli butter. Place the chillies on a hot barbecue and cook for about 10 minutes, turning often, until blackened all over. Pop them into a bowl, cover with cling film and let steam for a few minutes.

2 For the garlic mayo, cut the top off the garlic bulb to expose the clove tips. Sit, cut side up, in a small heavy-based frying pan, drizzle over the extra virgin olive oil and sprinkle with salt, pepper and thyme.

3 Scatter a large handful of hickory wood chips onto the barbecue coals for extra smokiness. Place the frying pan on the barbecue over indirect heat. Put the lid on the barbecue and cook the garlic for 45 minutes or until it is soft.

4 Meanwhile, peel, deseed and finely chop the chillies. Place in a bowl with the softened butter, smoked paprika and chopped parsley. Mix well and season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

5 Remove the pan from the barbecue and transfer the garlic to a plate. Leave to cool. Once cooled, squeeze the soft garlic flesh out of the skins into a bowl and mash well with a fork. Add the mayo and lemon juice, season with salt and pepper to taste and mix to combine.

6 Halve the aubergines lengthways and then cut a 2cm thick steak from each half.

7 Cook the aubergine and halloumi steaks on the barbecue over a medium-high heat for about 3–4 minutes on each side until nicely browned and tender. Turn and brush them with a little chilli butter as they cook but allow the halloumi to caramelise before flipping it over.

8 Towards the end of the cooking, lightly toast the burger buns on the barbecue, cut side down, then remove and smear the cut surfaces with any remaining chilli butter.

9 To assemble, spread some garlic mayo on the burger bun bases. Add an aubergine steak, a halloumi steak and then a big handful of rocket. Spread some more garlic mayo on the bun lids. Sandwich the burgers together and secure the lid with a wooden skewer. Tuck in!

