

Tomato-Basil Burgers

Picnic at the Lake | July/August 2006



Choose hormone-free, local beef if you can find a source (try a farmers market). Look for 85% lean for optimum flavor and juiciness.

- 2 LB. GROUND BEEF
- 2 TBSP. FINELY CHOPPED, DRAINED, OIL-PACKED DRIED TOMATOES
- 2 TBSP. SNIPPED FRESH BASIL
- 1 TSP. SEA SALT
- 1/2 TSP. FRESH CRACKED BLACK PEPPER
- 8 OZ. SMOKED FRESH MOZZARELLA OR FRESH MOZZARELLA, SLICED
- 8 SOURDOUGH OR KAISER BUNS
- 2 CUPS LIGHTLY PACKED ARUGULA, WATERCRESS, OR SPINACH
- 1 LARGE (OR 2 SMALL) YELLOW AND/OR RED SWEET PEPPER, ROASTED*, OR 3/4 CUP BOTTLED ROASTED RED SWEET PEPPERS, CUT INTO STRIPS
- 1 RECIPE *PESTO MAYONNAISE*

Combine beef, tomatoes, basil, salt, and black pepper in a bowl; mix lightly. Shape into eight 1/2-inch-thick patties. Grill patties on the rack of an uncovered grill directly over medium coals** for 10 to 13 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the side of patty registers 160°, turning once.

During the last 1 to 2 minutes of grilling, top burgers with cheese and place buns, cut sides down, on grill rack to toast. Place arugula on bottom halves of toasted buns. Top with burgers, then roasted pepper strips. Spread *Pesto Mayonnaise* on top halves of buns and place atop peppers. Makes 8 servings.

PESTO MAYONNAISE: Stir together 1/3 cup mayonnaise and 1/4 cup purchased basil pesto. Season to taste with salt, black pepper, and bottled hot pepper sauce.

***NOTE:** To roast sweet peppers on the grill, quarter peppers lengthwise, discarding seeds and membranes. Grill, skin side down, directly over medium coals for 10 minutes or until blistered and dark. Wrap pepper quarters in foil; let stand 15 minutes or until cool enough to handle. Peel away skin with a sharp knife.

****NOTE:** For a smokier burger flavor, use hardwood chunk charcoal, such as mesquite or applewood.