

BEEF BURGER WITH BACON AND A CHEESE SAUCE

WHAT YOU NEED (serves 6)

For the cheese sauce:

2 tots butter

2 tots cake flour

2 cups milk (full cream, obviously)

1 tot Dijon mustard

at least 1 cup grated mature

cheese (1 cup of grated cheese is about 100 g, but err on the side of extravagance – I use a mixture of Cheddar, Parmesan and whatever else happens to be in my fridge)

salt and black pepper to taste (not all cheese has the same salt content)

For the burgers:

1 kg good-quality beef mince

1 tot olive oil

salt and pepper (optional)

1 packet smoked streaky bacon (200–250 g)

6 hamburger rolls (sliced open and buttered on the insides)

lettuce leaves (washed and drained)

2 large tomatoes (sliced)

WHAT TO DO

Make the cheese sauce:

1. Melt the butter in a pot over medium heat and then add the flour. Stir until the flour is mixed smoothly with the butter, and then cook for 1 minute, stirring all the time.
2. Pour in the milk bit by bit while stirring vigorously to incorporate it completely and make a smooth sauce. A wooden spoon should work fine, but if you struggle, use a metal hand whisk. Never leave the sauce unattended; believe me, I speak from experience. If at any time you feel you're losing control, decrease the amount of heat reaching the pot and first fully combine everything already in the pot before adding more milk.
3. As soon as all the milk has been incorporated, toss in the mustard and cheese. Stir well until the cheese has melted.
4. Take the pot off the heat and test for seasoning. Add salt and pepper if the sauce needs it. Some cheeses are very salty already and the sauce will only need a decent grinding of black pepper. Keep the sauce aside until the burgers are ready. Reheat and stir just before pouring it over the burgers – and don't worry about that 'skin' forming on top of the sauce, for it stirs away. Alternatively, make the sauce while braaing the patties.

Make the burgers:

1. Divide the mince into 6 balls, then use your clean wet hands to shape them into patties. Always flatten them a little more than you think, because they will shrink and thicken in the middle during the braai. Brush them with olive oil on both sides.
2. Put the patties on an open grid and season the top with salt and pepper. Cook for about 5 minutes, then carefully (yet confidently) flip them over with a metal spatula. Season with salt and pepper, and cook for another 5 minutes on the other side – 10 minutes in total. To be clear, you only turn the patties once on the braai. Every time you turn them, there is a risk of breaking them. Don't fiddle with the patties while they are on the braai, because it only makes you look like a beginner.
3. While you're braaing the patties, also braai the bacon until crispy. You can do this in a pan, or you can lay the rashers out on the braai grid, and also only turn them once. Take care not to drop any bacon through the grid onto the coals.
4. Put the sliced rolls buttered side down on the grid, then toast until they are golden brown. Take them off the fire. Don't burn the rolls; it happens easily.
5. To assemble the burgers: Put a piece of lettuce and 2 slices of tomato on the bottom half of the roll. The strips of crispy bacon go on next, then the braaied patty. Top it off with a generous helping of warm cheese sauce.