

Best-Ever Beet and Bean Burgers

makes about 6 burgers

1/2 cup brown rice (doubled if you like more rice)
1 onion, diced small
3 large red beets (about 1 pound), diced small
3-4 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tablespoons cider vinegar
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
juice from 1/2 lemon
1 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tablespoons parsley, minced
1 teaspoon coriander
1/2 teaspoon thyme
2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour
salt and pepper
thin slices of provolone or monterey jack cheese (optional)

Bring a large amount of water to a boil. Add a handful of salt and the rice, and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook the rice until it's a little *beyond* al dente. You want it a little over-cooked, but still firm. This should take about 35-40 minutes. Drain the rice and set it aside.

Heat a teaspoon of olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, reduce the heat to medium, and cook until the onions are translucent and softened. Stir in the beets. Cover the pot and cook until the beets are completely tender, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic and cook until it is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Deglaze the pan using the cider vinegar.

Empty the black beans into a large bowl and use a fork to mash them up a bit. Add the cooked rice, the beet and onion mixture, the lemon juice, the olive oil, and all the spices. Stir to combine and then taste for seasonings. Add salt and pepper to taste. Once it tastes the way you like it, add the flour and stir until you see no more dry flour.

Heat a cast-iron skillet over the highest heat. Add a few tablespoons of olive oil - the oil should completely coat the bottom of the pan. When you see the oil shimmer and it flows easily, the pan is ready.

Using your hands, scoop up about a cup of the burger mixture and shape it into a patty between your palms. Set it in the pan, where it should begin to sizzle immediately. (If it doesn't sizzle, wait a minute or two before cooking the rest of the burgers.) Shape and add as many more patties as will fit in your pan. Once all the patties are in the pan, reduce the heat to medium-high.

Cook the patties for 2 minutes, then flip them to the other side. You should see a nice crust on the cooked side. If they break apart a little when you flipped them, just reshape them with the spatula - they'll hold together once the second side is cooked. If you're adding cheese, lay a slice over the burgers now. Cook the second side for another 2 minutes.

Serve the veggie burgers on soft burger buns or lightly toasted sandwich bread along with some fresh greens.

Cooked burgers should be eaten that same day. You can also save leftover mix in the fridge for up to a week and cook just one or two burgers as you want them.

