

Mustard Seed Chicken Burger

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A chicken burger bursting with flavor: the secret is mustard seeds. They are soaked until they pop easily against the teeth, like the best caviar but with a spicy hit. The soaked seeds keep very well in the refrigerator and give an extra zap of flavor to mashed potatoes, soups, pasta, roasted fish, and to cream and butter sauces.

Serves 4

2 tablespoons brown mustard seed
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
3 tablespoons dry white wine
1 tart green apple, peeled
1 1/2 pounds raw, skinless, boneless, dark chicken meat (from legs and thighs), coarsely chopped and chilled
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
4 green onions, white and light green parts only, finely sliced (about 1/2 cup)
2 tablespoons olive oil plus more for brushing
Salt and freshly ground pepper
4 onion buns
1 ripe avocado

In a small saucepan, mix together the mustard seeds, vinegar, and wine. Bring to a boil and pour into a small bowl. Cover and let sit overnight. The seeds will soften and swell. Drain and reserve the seeds. Refrigerate in a covered container until needed. They can be soaked and drained well ahead of time.

Into a large bowl, coarsely shred the apple. Add the chicken, mustard seeds, mustard, and green onions. Lightly but thoroughly knead them together well. Handling lightly to keep the texture light and juicy, divide

the chicken into 4 evenly-sized patties about 1 inch thick. Cover and refrigerate at least 30 minutes or as long as overnight.

When ready to cook, heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until very hot or build a medium-hot fire in a barbecue. Brush the burgers on both sides with olive oil and generously season on both sides with salt and pepper.

Cook the burgers in the skillet, turning once or twice, until browned and cooked through, 10 to 15 minutes. Do not press down on the patties. With a large spoon, baste the burgers several times with the fat in the pan. (You can also preheat the oven to 450° F and cook the burgers on top of the stove until they are brown on both sides, and then finish them in the oven.) To grill the burgers, oil the grate, arrange the patties on it, and cover. Cook until done as above.

As the burgers cook, toast the buns in a toaster oven or under the broiler, about 5 inches from the heat, until lightly toasted. Or toast them on the outer perimeter of the grill rack.

When done, remove the burgers to a warm platter, keep them warm, and let rest several minutes while dressing the buns. Peel and slice the avocado.

To assemble the burgers, spread the bun bottoms with ketchup. Add several avocado slices, the burgers, and top with a small pile of Endive-Apple Salad (see below) Close with the bun tops and serve immediately.

Endive-Apple Salad

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This easy, quick salad adds cool crunch and a touch of sweet moistness to the mustard seed burgers. It would work just as well with seafood and

vegetarian burgers. For extra color, use one head each green and red endive. To keep its flavor fresh, make it close to serving time.

Serves 4

2 tablespoons pine nuts
2 teaspoons sherry vinegar
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 small heads endive
1 small tart green apple
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh chives

In a small dry pan, toast the pine nuts over medium heat until lightly browned all over, about 3 minutes. Be careful not to overcook; pine nuts burn easily. Immediately pour the nuts onto a saucer to cool.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the vinegar, olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste. Cut the endive crosswise into thin slices and toss them with the dressing. Quarter and core the apple. Slice the quarters thinly crosswise, and then cut the slices into matchsticks. Toss these with the endive. Add the pine nuts and chives, toss well, and taste for seasoning. Toss again just before serving.