

Garlicky Spinach and Italian-Sausage Burgers

The original recipe served 4 people, but who wants a recipe that serves just 4! You can always invite more people over for dinner or have left-overs. They are very good as left-overs.

This up-sized recipe is good for 6; double it to have Garlicky Spinach and Italian-Sausage Burgers for a dozen people if you want to be popular.

Here's the recipe from Food & Wine's 'Reinventing the Classics' with my pictures and comments:

Create a new, flavorful twist on the classic cheeseburger by using Italian sausage and provolone. The meat is pre-seasoned, so dinner—including garlicky spinach spiked with anchovy paste—will be served in 30 minutes, or more if you're enjoying a glass of wine while making this recipe.



Garlicky spinach spiked with anchovy paste.

Serves 6

Spinach Ingredients:

- 16 Ounces of Baby Spinach
- 3 Tbsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil, plus more for brushing
- 3 Cloves Garlic, minced
- 2 Tsp. Anchovy Paste (optional)
- Salt

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A



B



C

In a large skillet, bring 1/4 inch of water to a boil. Add the spinach and cook, stirring, until just wilted, about 1 minute; drain and press out as much water as possible. Wipe out the skillet. (It takes 2 large skillets to cook 16 ounces, whether you do them one-at-a-time or at the same time in 2 pans.)

In the same skillet, heat the 2 tablespoons of olive oil until shimmering (A). I did this on my outdoor grill, *finally* a reason for that side-burner! Add the garlic and anchovy paste and cook over high heat, stirring, until fragrant, 1 minute. If your neighbors close their windows you'll know it's "fragrant." (B) Add the spinach, season with salt and stir just until coated, about 10 seconds (C).

Burger Ingredients:

- 1.5 pound sweet or hot Italian sausages. You can combine any mix of sweet & hot sausage, or pork & turkey sausage, or hamburger & sausage, with casings of any sausages removed.
- 6 slices of provolone cheese.
- 1/2 cup sun-dried-tomato pesto.
- 6 round ciabatta rolls , split and toasted.

Light a grill or preheat a grill pan. Using slightly moistened hands, form the sausage meat into four 4-inch patties, about 3/4-inch thick. Brush the burgers with oil and grill over moderate heat until browned and crusty on the bottom, about 5 minutes. Carefully flip the burgers.

Top with the provolone cheese and grill until the burgers are cooked through and the cheese is melted, about 5 minutes longer. Spread the pesto on the rolls. Top with the burgers and spinach and serve.

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Wine Pairing

Italian sausage needs a robust red wine like Zinfandel. During a recent cookout with this recipe, we not only had a Zinfandel that paired well, but 2 other red wines that went well also—a red blend and a Merlot. I think a wide variety of red wines could go with these burgers very easily. The strong flavors of garlic, anchovy, sun-dried-tomato pesto, and whatever else you add to the burgers will probably blend with most red wines.

Here are the red wines that we sampled with the Garlicky Spinach and Italian-Sausage Burgers:

- 2008 Mr. Mister (100% Merlot varietal), Brian Benson Cellars, Paso Robles
- 2009 The Bride (Barbera, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Sangiovese), Cantara Cellars, Lodi
- 2011 Predator Old Vine Zinfandel, Rutherford Wine Company, Lodi.

I could have had any one of these with this dish! And did!



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