Ultimate Veggie Burgers

Ingredients
¾ cups dried brown lentils, rinsed and picked over
2 ½ teaspoons sea salt divided
¾ cup bulgur wheat *or, if gluten-free, brown rice
2 tablespoons olive oil or coconut oil or organic pasture butter
2 medium onions, finely chopped (2 cups)
1 large celery rib, finely chopped (1/2 cup)
1 small leek, white and light green parts only, finely chopped (1/2 cup)
2 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (2 teaspoons)
1 pound cremini or white mushrooms, cleaned and sliced about ¼ inch thick (about 6 ½ cups)
1 cup raw, unsalted cashews
1/3 cup Veganaise (grapeseed based mayonnaise replacement)
2 cups Panko bread crumbs (Japanese bread crumbs) *If gluten-free, you may try crushed corn flakes or rice Chex or rice cakes or gluten-free bread crumbs (Glutino® or other).
Ground black pepper (to taste)

Directions
1. Lentils: Bring 3 cups water, lentils and 1 teaspoon salt to boil in medium saucepan over high heat; reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until lentils are just beginning to fall apart, about 25 minutes. Drain in fine-mesh strainer. Line baking sheet with triple layer paper towels and spread drained lentils over towels. Gently pat lentils dry with additional paper towels; cool lentils to room temperature.
2. Bulgur/Brown Rice: While lentils simmer,
   a. Bulgur: bring 2 cups water and ½ teaspoon salt to a boil in small saucepan. Stir bulgur wheat into boiling water and cover immediately; let stand off heat until water is absorbed, 15-20 minutes. Drain in fine-mesh strainer; use rubber spatula to press out excess moisture. Transfer bulgur to medium bowl and set aside.
   b. Brown Rice: bring 1 ½ cup water, ½ teaspoon salt and ¾ cup brown rice to a boil. Turn heat down to simmer, cover and cook until all liquid is gone, 30-40 minutes.
3. Vegetables and Mushrooms: Heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add onions, celery, leek, garlic and mushrooms; cook, stirring occasionally, until veggies begin to brown, about 10 minutes. Spread veggie and mushroom mixture on a baking sheet; cool to room temperature, about 20 minutes.
4. Nuts: Process cashews in a food processor until finely chopped, about fifteen 1-second pulses (do not wash food processor blade or bowl); stir into bowl with bulgur along with cooled lentils, veggie-mushroom mix, and Veganaise. Transfer half of mixture to now-empty food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped, fifteen to twenty 1-second pulses; mixture should be cohesive but roughly textured. Transfer processed mixture to large bowl; repeat with remaining unprocessed mixture and combine with first batch. Stir in breadcrumbs or pulverized cereal, 1 teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Line baking sheet with paper towels. Divide mixture into 12 portions, about ½ cup each, shaping each into tightly packed patty, 4 inches in diameter and ½ inch thick; set patties on baking sheet; paper towels will absorb excess moisture (patties can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerate up to 3 days).
5. Burgers:
a. To cook on the grill: build medium-hot charcoal fire or preheat gas grill on high. Using tongs, wipe grate with wad of paper towels dipped lightly in vegetable oil. Grill burgers without moving them, until well browned, about 5 minutes; flip burgers and continue cooking until well-browned on second side, about 5 minutes.

b. To cook on the stovetop: heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering; cook burgers, 4 at a time, until well-browned, about 4 minutes per side, lowering heat to medium if browning too quickly. Repeat with additional oil and burgers. Serve (cooked burgers can be kept warm in 250 degrees Fahrenheit oven for up to 30 minutes).

Serving suggestions: 1) Serve on a whole grain hamburger bun with lettuce, tomato, onion, and other veggies, 2) Serve over green salad as croquets, 3) Serve over brown rice with stir-fried vegetables, 4) Eat all by itself!

Recipe adapted by Leigh Wagner MS, RD, LD from *Cook’s Illustrated* Magazine, July 2005.