

# Raw Tabbouleh

My favorite restaurant in Cluj is Samsara. It is so good, it is nearly worth the three flights and layovers required, just for a meal! Although everything is delicious, I was especially intrigued by their raw tabbouleh. I took a photo and made note of the ingredients while enjoying each bite, vowing to make it at home. This week, when I hosted three brilliant women for an afternoon idea exchange, I had the perfect opportunity to recreate it. Naturally, I could not leave well enough alone and added a few ingredients, creating my own inspired version. Please don't be put off by the long list here. You can make quick work with a food processor or veggie bullet.

## Ingredients

- 1 small head cauliflower, finely chopped or shredded
- 1 bunch of broccoli, finely chopped or shredded
- 1 small bunch of kale, destemmed, chiffonade
- 1 small red onion, minced
- 2 large bunches flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped, plus more to taste
- 8 large tomatoes, halved, flesh scooped out, finely diced
- 1 small red onion, minced
- bunch green onions, finely chopped (white and green parts)
- 1 English cucumber, flesh scooped out and diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sunflower seeds
- Seeds from one pomegranate

Combine ingredients in a large salad bowl, reserving pomegranate seeds.

## Dressing

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh lemon juice, plus more to taste
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup (more or less according to taste)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon Celtic sea salt, plus more to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

Add all ingredients to a lidded glass jar, shake well and pour a generous amount over the tabbouleh. Mix well and allow to chill for a few hours for the flavors to meld. Add more dressing if needed. Sprinkle with pomegranate seeds before serving.

Enjoy!

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## Berry Tart

Although I have been enjoying summer's beautiful berries just as they are, this weekend I couldn't help myself putting them into a tart shell. The berries, of course, play the starring role – but without a yummy crust to back them up, the results would be disappointing. I found my solution taking inspiration from this tomato tart recipe I posted last month in France. With just a few tweaks in flour choices and a splash of maple syrup, I found just what I was looking for – a nice crumbly crust with just enough flavor.

### Tart Crust

- 2 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 4 tbsp water

- 1/2 cups ground walnut meal
- 1/2 cup coconut flour
- 1 cup of buckwheat flour
- 3/4 tsp sea salt
- 2 tbsp coconut oil or melted plant-based spread
- 1-4 tbsp plant-based milk, amount may vary

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Combine flaxseed and water in a small dish and set aside. Measure and mix together all dry ingredients. Blend oil and flaxseed into flours, using your hands. Add enough plant-based milk so that the ingredients can be formed into a ball. Gently press into bottom and sides of tart pan.

Prick the bottom layer with a fork and place in the oven for 10 minutes. Prepare filling.

## **Filling**

- 4 cups of berries (I used blueberries and blackberries)
- Juice from one lemon
- 3 tbsp tapioca starch
- 2 tbsp Maple Syrup
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp fresh grated nutmeg

In a large bowl, combine berries and tapioca starch, coating them well. Mix in additional ingredients. Pour berries into pre-baked tart shell and return to oven for 40 minutes.

Enjoy!

(stores well in a cool oven overnight without covering)

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# Vegan Cassoulet

Cassoulet is a French classic and (traditionally) absolutely not vegan. But you can easily capture the essence of this comfort-food dish in my meat-free version. Even better on the second day, cassoulet can be made the night before and gently reheated, perhaps served alongside a hearty kale salad for a delightful weeknight supper.

## Ingredients

- 1 cup dry white beans, soaked 8 hours and cooked until tender (drain excess liquid). Alternatively, use 3 cups canned white beans, drained and washed (consider cannellini or navy beans)
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 1-2 cloves garlic, finely minced or crushed into a paste
- 15 mushrooms sliced (consider baby bella or crimini)
- 2 tomatoes diced and seeded
- 1 tbsp chopped sage or several fried sage leaves
- 1 tbsp chopped thyme (save some small sprigs for serving)
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 tbsp parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 vegetarian bouillon cube
- Salt and ground black pepper to taste

## Directions

1. Heat oil in a large, heavy saucepan.
2. Add the onions, garlic and carrots. Add a pinch of salt and ground black pepper. Saute the vegetables for about five minutes, until the onions are translucent. Remove and set aside.

3. Add coconut oil to the saucepan, and when heated, add the mushrooms. Brown mushrooms in small batches to avoid overcrowding, which leads to steaming rather than searing them.
  4. Add the tomatoes with the bay, sage, parsley and thyme.
  5. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil. Add more water if the stew is too thick. Turn the heat to a level where it boils gently.
  6. Taste to check seasoning, pour into an ovenproof dish and bake for 40 minutes at 350 degrees. Garnish with fresh thyme and enjoy!
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## Nutella Chia Parfait

I do realize that I am sharing a silly chia pudding recipe during peak veggie season. I get it. This wasn't planned, but now that I am home I am missing a little taste of Europe. And what's more European than Nutella, right? I gave up Nutella years ago when I changed my diet, but I still adore the combination of chocolate and hazelnut. If you are also a fan, you'll find this recipe an easy fix for your cravings.

It's been crazy hot here in Texas since my return, so I've been playing with some no-bake treats to get us through the long afternoons spent indoors. This one won the prize. I hope it does at your home as well.

## Ingredients

### pudding

- 1 cup almond milk + 1 cup coconut milk (or 2 cups of any of the richer plant-based milks, such as cashew or oat)
- 8 slightly rounded tablespoons of chia seeds

- 2 level tablespoons of raw cacao powder
- 2 heaping tablespoons of organic hazelnut butter (or replace with any other nut butter of your choice)
- 2 tablespoons of maple syrup, date syrup or honey (more or less depending on taste)
- 1 tea of vanilla or a pinch of vanilla powder

### **Fruit topping**

- 2-3 bananas
- Ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon of the sweetener of your choice above
- Coconut oil or coconut butter

## **Directions**

Mix all ingredients for pudding in a large bowl with a whisk, or shake well in a wide mouth mason jar. Let stand in the fridge for a minimum of 2 hours to hydrate the chia seeds. Overnight works well too.

Then, 15 minutes before assembling the parfait, heat coconut oil or coconut butter in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Add peeled and sliced bananas, sprinkle with cinnamon and drizzle with sweetener. Gently mix as bananas soften. You will want to cook the bananas just until they soften, yet still hold a bit of their shape. Set aside to cool.

When the banana topping is cooled, layer with chia pudding in small glasses and enjoy!

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## **A Tale of Two Sauces**

I am a huge sauce fan, much to my husband's indifference. Like many passionate cooks, I believe sauce elevates an everyday,

simple meal to special status. When perfect seasonal produce is plentiful, I am drawn to create simple meals of grilled veggies, changing things up with a variety of sauces. I don't mind eating zucchini or eggplant several times a week if I can create my own version every time.

So when my dear friend and Ariege Gemmo Mom came for lunch, the menu was simple: tossed salad with a citrus vinaigrette, grilled eggplant and zucchini, and steamed new potatoes.

The stars of the show, however, were my chard pesto and romesco sauce. While pesto has its origins in Genoa, Italy, romesco comes from a city called Tarragona in Catalonia, the northeastern-most region of Spain, only a few hours from Foix. Here how's you can repeat my vegan versions of those sauces at home. You will discover they complement pasta, polenta, rice and a wide variety of veggies.

## **Lauren's Romesco Sauce (Vegan)**

### **Roast at 400 degrees:**

- 8 Roma or 4 large heirloom tomatoes, sliced in half, seeded, roasted until they begin to fall apart
- 2 large sweet/mild red peppers, cut in half and roasted until the skin is charred

Allow tomatoes and peppers to cool and remove skin.

**In a heavy skillet on medium heat, roast these items individually:**

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup blanched almonds (the skins are fine but will add more texture), remove when lightly toasted
- 1 slice stale gluten-free bread, whole grain if possible, broken into pieces, remove when lightly toasted

### **Add to the bowl of the food processor:**

- Roasted and skinned tomatoes and peppers
- Peeled and diced small shallot or smashed garlic clove (according to taste)
- Almonds
- Bread
- 1 tablespoon wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- A dash of cayenne pepper or 1 tablespoon harissa sauce (optional)
- Salt to taste

## **Lauren's Chard Pesto (Vegan)**

- 1 cup of ground nuts (consider pumpkin seeds and almonds)
- 4 large chard leaves, stem and chiffonade
- 2 handfuls of basil leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup full-bodied olive oil (the better the oil, the better the pesto)
- A splash or two of umami vinegar or 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (these add a cheesy flavor and can be omitted)
- Juice of one medium lemon or lime
- Salt to taste

I prefer to grind the nuts first, setting them aside in a mixing bowl, then blend the greens, basil and olive oil. This produces a more textured pesto. But please feel free to add all the ingredients to your food processor and process to your desired consistency. Salt to taste. This can be served immediately but is best if the flavors are given an hour or more to meld.

Pesto stores well for a few days, but it will thicken, so you may want to thin a bit with more oil or citrus juice.



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# Walnut-Crusted Tomato Tart

May I just say how delighted I am to have mastered a gluten-free, vegan tomato tart this summer? Picture-perfect, savory and seasonal tarts are a mainstay in French cuisine, and they typically involve large quantities of butter, cream, eggs and wheat flour. Thanks to Niki of Rebel Recipes, I have been inspired and succeeded in mastering a tart I could eat. And it was delicious. So many possible variations to try next! That includes zucchini, aubergine, spinach and artichokes, to name just a few.

## Ingredients

### Tart crust:

- 2 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 4 tbsp water
- 1/2 cups ground walnut meal
- 1 1/2 cups flour (I used a blend of oat and buckwheat)
- 3/4 tsp sea salt
- 1 1/2 tbsp coconut or olive oil
- 3 tbsp plant-based milk

### Filling:

- 1 cup soaked cashews (soak for 1 hour in hot water)
- 1/4 cup water
- 3 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp Herbes de Provence
- 1 tbs. Dijon mustard
- 4 small cherry tomatoes, or 1 medium tomato halved and seeded, set to drain on paper towels
- 1/2 can organic chickpeas drained

- 1 tsp sea salt

### **Toppings:**

- Small colorful heirloom tomatoes, cut in half seeded, set to drain on paper towels
- Drizzle olive oil
- Sprinkle sea salt
- Herbes de Provence

## **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Make a flax egg by mixing the ground flax and water in a bowl. Set aside to thicken.
3. Pour walnut meal into bowl. Add flax egg, oil and almond milk. Mix well, using hands to combine ingredients and form a ball.
4. Grease a round, loose bottom pie pan with oil.
5. Using your fingers, press crust dough into the bottom and up the side of the pan. Poke a few holes with a fork across the bottom.
6. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove and set aside to cool while preparing the filling.
7. Place all ingredients for the filling in a high speed blender or food processor. Blend until smooth.
8. Spoon filling mix into crust. Level out with a spoon and place tomatoes, pressing in slightly.
9. Drizzle with a little olive oil, herbs and sprinkle of sea salt
10. Return to the oven and bake for 25-30 minutes (until the base is crispy and the tomatoes are cooked and caramelized).
11. Allow to cool before removing the pan.
12. Tart is best served at room temperature and keeps well for up to 24 hours.

Enjoy!

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# Sweet Potatoes with Creamy Tahini Sauce

The pairing of creamy, steamed sweet potato with tangy, tahini topping is a match made in heaven. The simplicity begins with a short, accessible list of ingredients – and there is virtually no clean-up! Serve with a mixed green salad and you've got a weeknight winner.

## Ingredients

- 3 lb sweet potatoes, any color (6 small or 3 large), scrubbed
- 6 Tbsp coconut butter or your preferred vegan butter, room temperature
- Juice from 2 limes
- 2 Tbsp tahini
- 1 Tbsp coconut aminos or tamari
- 2 tsp toasted sesame oil
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
- Flaky sea salt
- Toasted sesame seeds and lime wedges (for serving)

## Directions

1. Bring a few inches of water to a boil in a medium pot fitted with a steamer basket. Halve sweet potatoes crosswise if large and place in steamer. Cover, reduce heat to medium and steam until fork-tender, 25–30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, smash together butter, lime juice, tahini, soy sauce and sesame oil in a small bowl with a fork until smooth, about 3 minutes. Season tahini butter with

kosher salt and lots of pepper.

3. Arrange sweet potatoes on a platter or a large plate. Let cool until you can just handle them, then split open and generously spread tahini butter over. Season with sea salt; top liberally with sesame seeds. Serve with lime wedges to brighten the flavors

Enjoy!

*Adapted from Bon Appetit's Sweet Potatoes with Tahini Butter*

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## Georgian Spinach Pkhali

It was news to me that Georgian food is quite popular in Ukraine. I certainly didn't want to miss an opportunity to try it. Sondro, the husband of my host Lena, is Georgian. So when she guided me to their neighborhood restaurant, I knew it would be good. Now to be clear, many of the most famous Georgian specialties involve bread, cheese and meat, but there is a surprising number of traditional foods that happen to be vegan. Lucky me! Actually, because over 40 percent of the land in Georgia is dedicated to agriculture, produce such as tomatoes, eggplants, walnuts, spinach and nuts are abundant and frequently featured in traditional foods. For seasoning, aromatic herbs such as tarragon, parsley, cilantro and fenugreek bring the dishes to life and give the distinct Georgian flavor.

As a spinach fan, I was totally intrigued by this spinach and walnut appetizer, which can also be prepared with carrots or beets. It will no doubt become a favorite once I am back in my Texas kitchen. And I will have some wonderful memories of eating it first in a sidewalk cafe in Kyiv.

# Ingredients

- 1.5 lb fresh spinach
- 8 oz walnuts
- 1 bunch cilantro, leaves removed and finely chopped (reserving some for serving)
- Up to 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green onion, minced
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons walnut oil
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander (or whole seeds toasted and ground with the walnuts)
- 1 teaspoon ground fenugreek
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pomegranate seeds

# Directions

1. In a pot of gently boiling salted water, blanch spinach to soften. Remove with a slotted spoon or tongs and immerse in ice water immediately. This step stops the cooking and maintains the bright green color.
2. Drain spinach well, squeezing out all excess water with your hands. Chop.
3. Grind walnuts to a coarse powder.
4. Combine nuts, spinach and remaining ingredients in a large bowl, mixing well with your hands.
5. Season mixture with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Refrigerate overnight or for six hours to combine flavors.
7. Shape into balls, topping each with a few pomegranate seeds and a sprinkling of cilantro leaves.

Enjoy! And keep an eye out for more Georgian recipes as I continue to explore this cuisine.

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# Awesome Raw Falafel

I will admit to being a huge falafel fan – and yet I know well that deep frying doesn't serve my body. All I have to do to remember is eat a few. ☐ So I was thrilled to discover a raw version this week at my favorite Romanian restaurant, Samsara. Of course, everything Samsara offers is exquisite, but these are extra special.

Because I am on the road, I haven't had a chance to play with using my convection oven as a dehydrator, but I hear from very reliable sources it works well. So there is no need to add another cooking tool and take up kitchen space. These falafels are the perfect summer supper – serve them up with sliced tomatoes and a garden fresh green salad.

## Ingredients

- 2 cups finely shredded carrots
- 1/2 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tsp minced garlic (optional)
- 3 tbsp minced yellow onion
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp curry powder
- 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds
- 1/2 tsp cumin, ground
- 1/4 cup flax seeds
- 1 cup sunflower seeds, raw

## Directions

1. Into your food processor add the sunflower seeds, flax seeds, garlic, cumin, curry powder, salt, and pepper

- flakes, and process until well combined.
2. Adding the onion and parsley, and pulse again until well combined.
  3. Add carrots as the final step, pulsing but leaving some texture.
  4. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and stir in sesame seeds until well combined.
  5. Using a tablespoon or small ice cream scoop, prepare balls.
  6. Place the balls onto mesh sheets and dehydrate or place in a convection oven (140-160 degrees F) for 4-6 hours depending on the size of falafel. You will want them to be slightly crispy on the outside and soft in the middle.

Serve with this cool and creamy cashew-tahini dip.

## Ingredients

- 1/2 cup raw cashews, soaked for six hours with cold water, or in hot water for one hour, drained
- Juice from a lemon
- 2 heaping tablespoons of tahini
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast (optional)
- 1/4 cup of water, or more if needed
- Black cumin seeds

Blend all ingredients except cumin in blender, food processor or in a bowl using an immersion blender. Process until very smooth. Season to taste and sprinkle with black cumin seeds before serving.

Enjoy!

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# Sweet and Spicy Roasted Plantains

When my cookbook-collecting daughter shared a copy of her latest find, Provisions, I immediately took notice. With 150 Caribbean-inspired vegetarian recipes, there was plenty to keep my interest. Plantains are a favorite in the Hubele home, so I was immediately intrigued by the Roasted Ripe Plantain with African Pepper Compote recipe.

It's a simple, straightforward recipe, great for weeknights. Just be sure to plan far enough ahead so your plantains have ripened. I found the perfect opportunity to test the recipe last Saturday after a long morning on the San Marcos River. I popped the plantains in the oven, and by the time I had the car unloaded and sauces made, they were ready to eat! This combination of creamy and crunchy textures, along with the sweet and spicy seasoning, makes it a real hit.

## Ingredients

- 4 whole ripe plantains
- 1 cup raw peanuts with skins (I replaced these with almonds. While not traditional, they were great!)
- 2 large avocados ( $\frac{1}{2}$  avocado per plantain)
- Juice of 3 limes
- 1 teaspoon paprika (I used smoked paprika)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of cayenne pepper
- Salt to taste
- African Pepper Sauce

## Directions

1. Roast ripe plantains in their skin in a 400-degree F oven for 35-40 minutes on a baking sheet.



2. While plantains are baking, slice avocados in half, remove pits, scooping out each half with a spoon. In a shallow bowl, mash slightly, careful to leave plenty of texture.
3. Add to the avocado mash: lime juice, spices and salt to taste.
4. Prepare pepper sauce according to recipe.
5. Place nuts on a baking sheet and heat in the oven until fragrant during the final 10 minutes of roasting the plantains. Coarsely chop nuts.
6. Slice each plantain lengthwise and lightly mash flesh with a fork. Top with seasoned avocado, pepper sauce and nuts.

*Adapted from Provisions, The Roots of Carribean Cooking*

*Photo by La.Catholique*

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## **Vegan Corn and Kale Chowder**

Here's a satisfying way to use sweet and tender fresh corn. Combining it with other seasonal vegetables makes this chowder a meal on its own. The smoky paprika adds a nice depth of flavor, complemented by the tang of fresh lime juice added before serving.

### **Ingredients**

- 5 ears of fresh corn, husks removed and sliced off the cob
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 sweet red bell pepper, diced
- 1 jalapeno, diced and seeds removed
- 3 cups red or Yukon Gold potatoes, diced (leaving the

peel on)

- 1 bunch of Tuscan kale, stems removed and sliced into fine strips
- $\frac{1}{2}$  bunch of cilantro, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- Olive oil
- 3 cups prepared vegetable broth (I use Rapunzel cubes with boiling water)
- 1 can coconut milk or 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of cashew milk
- Salt, pepper and red chili flakes to taste
- Lime wedges for serving

## Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion and a few pinches of salt. Cook until soft, then add peppers, sweet and jalapeno, and potatoes.
2. Continue cooking until peppers are soft. Add kale to the pan with enough broth just to cover. Simmer until potatoes are tender. Stir in spices and set aside, off heat.
3. In a cast iron or heavy skillet on medium-high heat, roast corn kernels until lightly charred. Mix corn kernels and coconut milk into the cooked vegetables and simmer to blend flavors.
4. Remove half of the mixture, and lightly blend the remaining ingredients with an immersion blender, leaving some texture. Combine all ingredients again, adjusting the amount of liquids and seasonings as needed.
5. Ladle into bowls, topping with a pinch of fresh cilantro and a sprinkle of paprika. Serve with a wedge of lime and extra pepper flakes on the side.

Enjoy!

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# Smoky Black Bean and Quinoa Burgers

One look at Minimalist Baker's latest veggie burger recipe, and I knew I had to make it. For me, the challenge was skipping the barbecue sauce (not a winner among the German guys I feed) and still achieve a well-seasoned result. I'd call the experiment a success! (and if you happen to be a barbecue sauce fan, you will find a link to the original recipe below)

Fair warning: You'll need to set aside a full hour to prep this mixture. Even with my best efforts to simplify steps, it still took time. The results were worth it, and once formed, the patties can be frozen for quick future meals.

## Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked quinoa (cook with a veggie bouillon cube for more flavor)
- 1 15-ounce can black beans (rinsed and dried in 350 degree oven for 15 minutes on a baking sheet to remove moisture)
- 3/4 cup finely ground nuts (I use Pamela's Nut Flour Blend)
- 1 Tbsp coconut or avocado oil (plus more for cooking burgers)
- 1 heaping cup sliced and peeled sweet potato (steamed until tender and cooled)
- 2 heaping cups thinly sliced cremini or button mushrooms (saute and drain any liquid)
- 2 Tbsp coconut aminos (optional)
- 1/2 tsp sea salt (plus more to taste)

- 2 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 1/2 tsp cumin powder

## Directions

1. Once sweet potato, beans, mushrooms and quinoa are cooled, you can begin to assemble your burgers.
2. Mix beans and nuts in a food processor and gently pulse into a loose meal (leaving texture).
3. Add cooked sweet potato, mushrooms, half the quinoa, sea salt, smoked paprika, cumin and coconut aminos, and pulse a few times to combine (keeping some texture to the mix).
4. Transfer to a mixing bowl and stir in the rest of the quinoa. Adjust seasonings to taste.
5. If the mixture appears too wet, add more ground nuts. If it looks too dry, add more coconut aminos to moisten.
6. Divide the mixture into evenly sized balls and form into patties with your hands. Refrigerate burgers for a minimum of 30 minutes (burgers can also be frozen at this point).
7. Once chilled, heat a cast-iron or heavy metal pan over medium heat. Once hot, add a bit of oil and the burgers. Cook 4-5 minutes. Carefully flip and cook 4-5 minutes on the other side.
8. Transfer browned patties to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake 15 minutes at 375° F.

You may enjoy this spicy avocado mayo to serve as a condiment. It was delicious!

Enjoy!

Adapted from Minimalist Baker

*Photo by Melissa Rae Dale*