

# Cumin-Coriander Beef Patties

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## INGREDIENTS

About 1 pound best-quality lean ground beef (or ground bison)  
1/2 cup finely chopped or grated onion or shallots  
1 teaspoon minced ginger or ginger ground to a paste (optional)  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1 teaspoon ground coriander  
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon cayenne  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/4 cup plain (full-or reduced-fat) yogurt  
1 teaspoon rice vinegar  
1/4 to 1/2 cup packed chopped coriander leaves or 1/4 cup minced mint leaves\*  
Peanut oil or vegetable oil

\* **Note:** *Chopped coriander is also known as cilantro. We've included mint in the recipe below, but you could just as easily substitute fresh, chopped cilantro.*

## PREPARATION

Place the meat in a bowl, add the onion or shallots, ginger, if using, cumin, coriander, cayenne, salt, yogurt, and vinegar, and mix with your hands or a rubber spatula or wooden spoon, turning and mashing and kneading to blend the flavors and get a smooth texture.

For very mild heat, use 1/4 teaspoon cayenne; for more perceptible heat, use 1/2 teaspoon or more.

A smooth elastic texture helps the meat hold together during cooking. (The mixture can be refrigerated, covered, for several hours. Remove from the refrigerator half an hour before cooking.)

Add the coriander or mint and mix in. Put out two plates and lightly oil them.

To shape eight medium patties, wet your hands with water, then scoop up about 1/4 cup of the mixture. Use your hands to shape and press it into an oval or round 3/4 inch thick. Give it several light but firm squeezes so it holds its shape, then place it on an oiled plate and repeat with the remaining meat.

*To grill the patties,* prepare a charcoal or gas grill. Lightly oil the rack. Transfer the patties to the grill and cook over a medium flame, turning them after 5 minutes or so, until done the way you like them. Do not press and flatten the meat with your spatula.

*To broil the patties,* preheat the broiler. Place the patties on the lightly oiled rack of the broiler pan and place the pan under the broiler so that the patties are 5 to 7 inches from the heating element. Leave the oven door propped slightly ajar as you broil. Cook until the tops are browned, then turn them over and cook on the second side; you may wish to turn them back over to finish off the first side. Cooking time depends on how well done you like them; we usually allow about 8 minutes total.

*To panfry the patties, place a large heavy skillet over high heat. Add 2 tablespoons oil, then lower the heat to medium-high. Put in as many patties as fit comfortably in the pan. If you like a slightly crusty outside, leave the heat at medium-high; if you want a softer outside, lower the heat to medium. Cook for about 3 minutes over medium-high, 4 minutes over medium, then turn the patties over and cook for another 3 or 4 minutes on the second side.*

*Serve with flatbreads or rice and a fresh salad. You might put out a hot condiment as well, a sambol, such as Sri Lankan Seeni Sambol, or just Dijon mustard.*

**Note:** If you are using frozen ground beef, make sure that the meat has completely defrosted. If there are any little cold lumps left in the meat, they will prevent it from holding together properly, and they will also give off excess water as they cook. Pour off any water that accumulated as the meat is defrosted.

**Spiced Pork Kebabs:** The kebab tradition in the Subcontinent came with the Moghul conquerors, who brought their tandoor ovens and Persian-style tastes about ten centuries ago. The Moghuls were Muslim, so the meat traditions they introduced included lamb or goat and also beef, but not pork, which is *haram*, or "forbidden," to Muslims. Pork does, however, make a great kebab, especially if it's freshly ground. Our friend Cassandra, who helped test many of the recipes in this book, tried this recipe with pork and loved it. (If you are grinding the pork yourself in the food processor, it grinds easily if it's well chilled.) Use 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice in place of the vinegar, and use only 2 tablespoons yogurt; also include a pinch of ground cloves in the mixture. Make the patties thinner, 1/2 inch at their thickest point, so you can get them cooked through easily.