

**I am nothing if not lucky.** In fact, I'd go so far as to say, I'm absolutely, utterly and totally lucky. Growing up, my sister, brother and I had all sorts of wonderful opportunities. In the summer, we spent two weeks impatiently waiting for a ride to the town beach, two weeks at camp and a month on the Cape. Between the town beach and camp, we learned to swim. While they are now long gone, at least for a while, Mom had the certificates to prove it.

**Whether at camp or the town beach, swimming lessons were serious business.** For one thing, our instructors wore uniforms – red Speedos with a special lifeguard patch. Regardless of the weather, classes were held first thing in the morning. In addition to the red Speedos, these tyrants sported a whistle and did not hesitate to blow it. Every morning, they'd bark orders and toot the whistle as they put us through our drills: crawl, breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly and sidestroke.

**All those swimming lessons were endured for one reason and one reason only** – to pass the raft test. Without a doubt, passing the raft test was an important rite of passage. By important, I mean it was right up there with birth, death and marriage. Although, at seven or eight, I'm not sure we paid much attention to these milestones. In any case, swimming to the raft was certainly more important than a first haircut or high school diploma. Swimming to the raft meant that you were one of the big kids.

**The town beach had two rafts.** Both required a swimming test. The first was more than difficult. The second was almost beyond endurance. However, it was worth the struggle. As we all know, there is not a little kid alive who doesn't vie for the privileges of older siblings and neighbors. In the scheme of life, earning a driver's license is perhaps the only challenge on par with (and possibly more significant than) passing the raft test. That said; a three-point turn on a hill is nothing compared to the hundreds of laps required to exit the baby area and join the big kids on that elusive raft. Okay, so maybe it was only eight or twelve laps but it seemed like hundreds.

**For a long time, I thought everyone knew how to swim.** When you grow up in New England, in spite of our short summers, swimming is part of life. From the ice-cold ocean to a somewhat tepid pond, opportunities abound. As added insurance, our school district mandated swimming lessons for all sixth graders. Once a week, we hopped on a bus and headed to a pool for swimming lessons. No kid was going slip through the cracks.

**Eventually, life took me outside of my familiar New England boundaries.** On my quest for adventure, my horizons expanded and I met all sorts of wonderful people. Imagine my surprise to learn that a good many of them could barely swim a stroke. Meeting these non-swimmers reminded me of the charmed existence I lived as a child.

**When you're young, swimming is all about the joy** of diving under the lines that keep your little brother and his friends safe in shallow water. It's the wonderful sense of freedom from swimming away from the crowded beach. It's the feeling of strength and accomplishment as you climb out of the cool lake and on the raft. It's the fun and silliness when that cute boy throws you back in.

**News stories of a dozen young boys and their soccer coach trapped** in a flooded cave is a powerful reminder of my fabulously lucky life. So, to those Speedo-clad tyrants, their whistles and drills, I say thank you. My crawl may be weak but I can do a decent breaststroke for about a mile, maybe more.

Enjoy the water, stay safe and have a wonderful summer. Bon appétit!




## Turkey Burgers with Goat Cheese & Rosemary-Tapenade Aioli

*A taste of Provençal sunshine – hot off the grill. Enjoy!*

Serves 8

2 – 2 1/2 pounds ground turkey  
Olive oil  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
4 ounces goat cheese, sliced  
8 burger buns

Make the Rosemary-Tapenade Aioli. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium hot.

Divide the turkey into 8 pieces and gently pat into patties, brush both sides with a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place the turkey burgers on the grill and cook for 3-4 minutes. Flip and continue grilling for 2 minutes. Top each burger with sliced goat cheese and grill for 1 minute more.

Place the buns on the grill, turning once, and toast for 1 minute or less. Pop each turkey burger onto a bun, add a dollop of Rosemary-Tapenade Aioli and serve.

### Rosemary-Tapenade Aioli

Makes about 1 cup

3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary  
Juice of 1/2 lemon  
2/3 cup prepared mayonnaise  
1/3 cup tapenade (recipe follows)

Put the garlic, rosemary and lemon juice into the bowl of a small food processor and pulse until finely chopped and combined. Add the mayonnaise and tapenade and process until smooth. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving.

### Tapenade

Makes about 1 cup

Grated zest of 1 lemon  
Juice of 1/2 lemon  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
3 cloves garlic  
1 teaspoon anchovy paste  
1 tablespoon capers  
1 teaspoon herbs de Provence  
1/2 teaspoon hot pepper flakes or to taste  
About 8 ounces dry pack, oil cured black olives, pitted

Throw everything except the olives into the bowl of a small food processor. Pulse until well chopped and combined. About a quarter at a time, add the olives and process until smooth. You may need to add a little more olive oil. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or more to combine the flavors.

