The 21 Best Burgers in America, According to Chefs

Eat This, Not That!
MATT KIROUAC
April 8, 2024 at 11:30 AM

iStock

If there's anything more American than eating burgers, it's debating about burgers. Namely, it's the eternal debate about the best burgers in America, of which there are near-infinite opinions and possibilities.

We've rounded up the best burger chains, the best restaurant chains that serve burgers, and the best fast-food burgers. But what about the best burgers in general? Who better to poll than the pros?

We asked chefs and food experts nationwide to share their go-to burgers and what makes them the best. From frills-free smash burgers to nostalgic hometown favorites and from big cities to small towns, the results ran the gamut. According to chefs, these are 21 of the best burgers in America.

1. In-N-Out

Pre
Zero
Spor

In C
Ente
Pe
Mari
mist
offic
US
Kath
on 'C
slam
Ad
Millio
Every
Finan
NB
How
presi
emp
affor
Ya
Gold
high
case

Shutterstock

Nutrition:

Double-Double With Onion (Per Order)

Calories: 610 Fat: 34 g (Saturated Fat: 15 g)

Sodium: 1,660 mg

Carbs: 41 g (Fiber: 2 g, Sugar: 8 g)

Protein: 34 g

It's hard to deny the fame and fandom behind In-N-Out. Yes, this fast-food chain can hold its own against the best in the nation. So says Jessie Sheehan, a celebrated cookbook author, recipe developer, baker, and host of the She's My Cherry Pie podcast for the Cherry Bombe Podcast Network.

"I adore In-N-Out burgers, and whenever I am in L.A. I make a stop," Sheehan says. "My order is always a double-double Animal-style. I can't get enough of the flavor and texture of it all. There is crunch from the pickles and lettuce, soft and pillowyness from the buns, moisture from the spread and tomatoes, umami for days via the grilled onions, and fatty, unctuous deliciousness from the cheese. Can't say enough good things about it!"

RELATED: 10 Restaurant Chains That Serve the Best Classic Cheeseburgers

2. Shake Shack

Food
Pre
TikTo
shoc
Drun
Ch
The v
News
NB
Polic
alleg
two N
US
Neig
man
in Pe
Spor
US
Jont
ban f
gam
NB
Caitl
jerse
jerse
Wea
Ac
Midw
focu
nigh
Ac
Dow
retur
US

Photo: Shake Shack/Facebook

Nutrition:

Single ShackBurger (Per Order)

Calories: 500 Fat: 30 g (Saturated Fat: 12 g, Trans Fat: 1 g)

Sodium: 1,250 mg

Carbs: 26 g (Fiber: 0 g, Sugar: 6 g)

Protein: 29

Sometimes, even a fast-food burger scratches the itch better than anything else can. For Jean Drew Rivas, executive chef at Le Chick in Miami, with its own Royale with Cheese on the menu, it's a testament to the classic consistency of a brand like Shake Shack. "The classic ingredients they use always make for the best burger, which comes packed with flavor at an affordable price," the chef says. "You can take the whole family here for a filling meal without breaking the bank."

3. Five Guys

FIVE G
BURGERS AN

Photo: Five Guys / Facebook

Nutrition:

Hamburger Patty + Bun (Per Order)

Calories: 542 Fat: 26 g (Saturated Fat: 11.5 g, Trans Fat: 1 g)

Sodium: 380 mg

Carbs: 39 g (Fiber: 2 g, Sugar: 8 g)

Protein: 25

Sol Han is another fan of Five Guys. The executive chef of LittleMad in New York City says the consistency and reliability are hard to beat: "There are so many burger spots, but I must say the one I always go to is Five Guys. It's quick and always consistent." Han adds that the patty is a smashed style, which gives it optimal texture in every bite, and the sesame seed bun is a nice touch. "The fact that you can add grilled onions and mushrooms makes it like you are getting a whole meal instead of just cheese and bacon, which is also fire on its own as well."

RELATED: 15 Healthiest Fast-Food Burgers, According to Dietitians

4. SilverLake Bistro

SilverLake Bistro/Facebook

Brad Kilgore, the acclaimed Miami chef behind MaryGold's by Brad Kilgore, says that SilverLake Bistro serves the best burger around. "It's a mom-and-pop vibe and a total hidden gem," he says. "I wish there were more restaurants like this one around town." He describes the Silverlake burger as the "quintessential American burger," toeing the line between refined and casual. "There's no froufrou or unnecessary items, but it still tastes gourmet and made from scratch, all while maintaining everyone's favorite toppings."

He suggests adding smoked bacon to the burger, which consists of double patties from grass-fed Creekstone Farms beef, cheddar, porcini mayo, and house-made steak sauce. "And if you're looking for something newer, stop by MaryGold's for our French onion burger."

5. Laha's Red Castle

Photo: Laha's Red Castle/Facebook

It turns out that the "best cheeseburgers in the world" are hiding in Kentucky. That's per Newman Miller, chef of Mr. Tubs in Bardstown, who raves about the cheeseburgers at Laha's Red Castle in Hodgenville. "A well-aged griddle, just the right amount of pepper and onion cooked into local beef, steamed perfectly, and wrapped in paper makes this burger heaven," he proclaims.

For an insider secret, he says there's a locals' favorite that "makes 'Animal-style' seem quaint," he says. "The Nasty Burger takes all the caramelized onion and cheese scrapings from the griddle and ceremoniously tops your burger with it, leading to an almost French onion soup-flavored situation, unreal. They've been around since 1934, so must be doing something right."

RELATED: 15 Healthiest Fast-Food Burgers, According to Dietitians

6. Bludorn

Photo: Bludorn

When chef Manabu "Hori" Horiuchi of Houston's Katami craves a burger, he heads to Bludorn. "My favorite burger is the dry-aged burger from Bludorn," says the chef, exalting it for its sublime simplicity, made with aged cheddar, short rib, Dijonnaise, and caramelized onions. "It is a traditional American burger that is very simple with good ingredients."

7. Le Tub

Corona
Light

Photo: TripAdvisor

For Adrienne Grenier, executive chef at Burlock Coast at the Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale, the best burgers are all about nostalgia. As at Le Tub, a tropical oasis of a restaurant in her hometown of Hollywood, Fla. "A very big factor is the setting, outside on the Intracoastal Waterway surrounded by tropical plants and a few bathtubs," says the chef, praising the restaurant for its rustic charm. "The burgers are very large and juicy, but there isn't exactly a kitchen, just one guy on a tiny grill outside on the dock."

RELATED: 10 Regional Burger Chains You Have To Try At Least Once

8. Father's Office

Visit Santa Monica with Father's Office/Facebook

When Grenier isn't going the nostalgia route, she's ordering the burger from Father's Office in Santa Monica. "My second favorite burger is at the original location of Father's Office in Santa Monica. It has dry-aged beef, caramelized onions, and a Gruyere-blue cheese blend, and no substitutions ever. It is perfect."

9. NFA

Photo: NFA Burger/Facebook

Although Matt Hyland, co-founder of Emily Brooklyn and Zoe Tong in Austin, usually prefers self-described "fat burgers," like those at Emily, he can't deny his affinity for smash burgers at NFA Burger in Dunwoody, Ga., just outside Atlanta. "I'm usually not a fan of smash burgers, but NFA does it perfectly," he notes. "Crispy but still juicy, with the sassy sauce to round it off. Bonus: It's in a gas station, so the potato chip selection is much better than a fine dining restaurant's wine cellar."

RELATED: 10 Best Fast-Food Burgers Under $5

10. Main Street Grill

Photo: Main Street Grill / Facebook

Taylor Montgomery has nothing but praise for the burgers at Main Street Grill in Weaverville, N.C. The executive chef of Urban Wren in Greenville, S.C., lauds the eatery for grinding its meat in-house and searing patties to perfection before topping it with pepper Jack cheese, crispy onion rings, and jalapeño aïoli. Says the chef, "I used to tuck in here all the time to grab a pint and indulge in the burger that, for so many reasons, is a can't-miss."

11. Heavy's Barburger

Photo: Heavy's / Facebook

It's all about the old-school vibes at Heavy's Barburger, which keeps Mark Bolchoz coming back for more. The chef, the culinary director of Italian concepts at The Indigo Road Hospitality Group, raves about the burgers at the Charleston institution: "It's a delicious, old-school crispy patty burger on a sesame bun. I get their classic Barburger with LTO, pickles, and their special sauce." Added bonus: "It always comes with an American flag toothpick and crinkle-cut fries, which is epic and the perfect Americana vibe. Cannot go wrong."

RELATED: 11 Restaurant Chains With the Most Over-the-Top Burgers

12. Diner Williamsburg

Photo: TripAdvisor

Diners and burgers are a quintessential match made in Americana heaven. It's a big part of the draw for Giorgia and Luca Fadda, owners of Epistrophy and Le Fanfare in New York City, who head to Diner Williamsburg when their burger cravings sink in. "The quality is very high," according to the Faddas. "The meat comes from their butcher shop, the meat is tasty and a good portion, not too big and not too small, perfectly balanced with the bun and the condiments. In short, a classic."

13. The Baroness

Photo: The Baroness Bar + Kitchen/Facebook

For Diana Manalang, chef/owner of Little Chef Little Cafe in New York City, her top pick is The Baroness in Long Island City. "Their burgers are fantastic. The meat is provided by Pat LaFrieda, and the combos of toppings and sauces offered really hit the spot each time. Plus, they offer to swap any burger for a house veggie burger or turkey patty for no charge." For a chain, though, she also tips her toque to Five Guys: "The burgers are made fresh, fast, and come with all of the toppings a flavor fanatic could want. And the bag full of Cajun fries really puts it over the top."

RELATED: 25 Most Iconic Fast-Food Dipping Sauces of All Time

14. Ada's Place

Photo: Ada's Place / Facebook

Following a recent trip to New York City, Gavin Fine returned wowed by the Wagyu burger—served with caramelized onions and American cheese—at Ada's Place. According to the owner of Jackson Hole's Fine Dining Restaurant Group, "The caramelized onions perfectly complement the tender, flavorful Wagyu beef used in the burger. It was the perfect snack to complement the tequila cocktails we enjoyed that night and probably one of the best burgers I've had in NYC!"

15. Au Cheval

Photo: Au Cheval/Facebook

Much has been made about the cheeseburgers at Au Cheval in Chicago, exalted by many as among the best in the country. Steve King agrees. Executive chef of Strong Water Anaheim, he says the simplicity belies its perfection: "With two patties, American cheese, and the addition of thick-cut bacon and a fried egg, it seems simple enough, but it's a lesson in the importance of great ingredients coupled with a deft touch."

RELATED: 10 Restaurant Chains That Serve the Best Turkey Burgers

16. Minetta Tavern

Photo: TripAdvisor

When he's not slinging his beloved burgers at Seamark Seafood&Cocktails in Boston, chef Michael Schlow gets his fill with the Black Label Burger at Minetta Tavern in New York City. "First and foremost, Minetta Tavern understands the importance of the bun-to-burger ratio," he proclaims. "Additionally, the Pat LaFrieda blend of prime meats, combined with the caramelized onions, creates a burger that is decadent, delicious, and it's always cooked to perfection. Every bite of this juicy, over-the-top burger never fails to satisfy, making it his top pick in the burger world."

17. La Lucha

GRAND PRIZE
CHA

Photo: La Lucha/Facebook

As the namesake owner of Houston's acclaimed Feges BBQ, Patrick Feges knows a thing or two about meat. So he's confident in declaring the Pharmacy Burger at La Lucha among the nation's best. "It's juicy, it's crunchy, it's gooey. It's just a perfectly balanced, no-frills burger."

RELATED: 11 Delicious Burgers You Can Only Order Off 'Secret Menus'

18. Sylvester's Burgers

Photo: Sylvester's

Jason Ryczek scratches his nostalgic itch at Sylvester's Burgers in the quaint California town of Baywood-Los Osos. According to the chef of Little's Oyster Bar in Houston, his homesick craving is a Sylvester's burger with an extra toasted bun and too much sauce. "It's just a good old-fashioned burger joint that has always held up."

19. Brasil

Photo: Brasil Cafe / Facebook

Another Houston chef, Austin Waiter of Marigold Club, raves about the extra-meaty rendition at Brasil. Describing the aptly dubbed Cheeseburger in Paradise from the Houston institution, he says, "It has everything I want in a burger: two thin patties that are nice and caramelized with a hint of spice from the jalapeño sauce, topped with crispy bacon and on a toasted potato roll." Conveniently close to all of the Goodnight Hospitality concepts, he adds, "It's nothing fancy, just a good down-to-earth burger, and that's what I love about it."

RELATED: 6 Fast Food Chains That Serve the Best Ice Cream Sundaes

20. 7th Street Burger

Photo: Uber Eats

"For me, the best burgers are smashed burgers," says Carlos Torres, vice president of culinary operations at The Dirty Rabbit Group. And for that, he heads to 7th Street Burger in New York City. "My favorite burger place is 7th Street Burger for their decadent piece of glory: two thin smash patties, grilled onions, cheese, and sauce." He describes it as "classic but rich and perfect."

21. Raoul's

Photo: TripAdvisor

For Mike Puma, founder of New York's Gotham Burger Social Club, one burger-famed spot that's stood the test of time is Raoul's. "Neighborhoods in New York are always changing, especially in prime areas like Soho. One spot that has not changed since when I moved here in the '90s is Raoul's." Puma explains that Raoul's serves one of his favorite burgers, the Burger au Poivre. "You must get there early and score a seat at the bar to grab one of the 12 available each night. Pair the burger with an ice-cold martini, and it's the perfect dinner."

Sign up for our newsletter!