



The 30 Best Burgers in America

BY ZAGAT STAFF | OCTOBER 5, 2016



Americans love to debate which local spot has the best burger in town. But when you talk about the best burgers in the country, the conversation gets much rowdier. Together with input from diners across the U.S. and the expertise of Zagat editors, we compiled a list of the nation's 30 best burgers right now based on flavor, quality of ingredients and overall value (presented in alphabetical order by vendor name). Without further ado, may we present your burger bucket list.



Cheeseburger at Au Cheval, Chicago, IL

One of the most buzzed about burgers in the country definitely lives up to the hype. And the grueling three-hour lines. The formula is pretty classic, but executed perfectly, and with an unabashed tendency for the indulgent. Case in point: The standard burger here comes with two patties. The double burger actually has three patties. Fun stuff. There's also American cheese, Dijonnaise and pickles atop griddled prime beef patties and a buttery toasted brioche bun. You can add thick-cut bacon if you'd like to gild the lily, but it's pretty perfect in its simplicity.

800 W. Randolph St.; 312-929-4580

Bernie's Burger Bus, Houston, TX

Seriously good burgers from a kitchen inside an indoor school bus? Believe it. This Houston school-themed mini-chain uses 100% Angus beef and other super-fresh ingredients to make its burgers to perfection.

Must-try burger: Class Clown. Originally a monthly special that gained such an enthusiastic following that owner Justin Turner had to make it a menu staple, this beaut features two patties of hand-ground beef covered in melted American cheese, lettuce, Roma tomatoes and a housemade special sauce on a potato bun.

5407 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire; 713-349-9400
2643 Commercial Center Blvd #320, Katy; 281-394-9006





Cheeseburger at Bowery Meat Company, NYC

Restaurateur John McDonald (Lure Fishbar) and chef Josh Capon opened this '60s-inspired East Village steakhouse last year. And while most folks tout the dry-aged steaks, the sleeper dish to order is the dry-aged burger. And it's no surprise. After countless Burger Bash wins, it's clear that "chef Capon knows burgers better than anyone." That sentiment is evident with this deeply flavored patty that is griddled to achieve the ideal balance of crisp crust and juicy exterior. Raclette cheese adds to the sharpness and grilled onions and tomato aioli round it out with some earthy sweetness. It's served atop a brioche bun alongside pickled vegetables and bowl of fries.

9 E. First St.; 212-460-5255

Bacon cheeseburger at Central Michel Richard, Washington, DC

When the late, great French-born chef Michel Richard made a burger, you knew it would somehow manage to be nostalgic and mind-blowing all at once — and it still is. Central's burger, which can be pimped out with cheddar and bacon, is an iconic must-try in DC. The stack includes a layering of flat potato tuiles that add a whimsical crunch, and burgers come with a choice of fries or a salad.

1001 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; 202-626-0015



The Company burger, New Orleans, LA

This five-year-old burger mini-chain with two locations has received dozen of accolades since opening, and for good reason. The house-ground beef blend created by chef Adam Biderman is one of the juiciest in the game.

Must-try burger: The Company burger, the signature dish here. Two thin patties are griddled diner-style and topped with bread and butter pickles, red onions and American cheese.

Multiple locations



Craigie burger at Craigie on Main, Cambridge, MA

A local legend for a reason. Though James Beard award-winning chef Tony Maws offers plenty of finer dining at his iconic Cambridge restaurant, the most famous dish might be the Craigie Burger, topped with mace ketchup and cheddar from Vermont's Shelburne Farm (add fried egg or bacon for a few extra bucks). This mythic, grass-fed patty was also an early adopter of a buzz-engendering "limited quantities" approach that other restaurants have adopted too — only 18 are made each night.

853 Main St., Cambridge; 617-497-5511





Burger Americain at Le Diplomate, Washington, DC

What's the only thing better than scoring a table on the patio of one of DC's hottest restaurants? Throwing caution to the wind and ordering a cheeseburger at a French bistro, that's what. The ultra-popular burger includes two special-blend Pat LaFrieda patties topped with American cheese, pickle chips and onion on a housemade sesame brioche bun slathered with special sauce. You can be a grown-up and order the boeuf bourguignon next time. It'll give you an excuse to return.

1601 14th St. NW; 202-332-3333

Build-your-own burger at Dugg Burger, Dallas, TX

At this fast-casual burger joint in Casa Linda or Plano, you get to showcase your creative genius when you step up to the counter and select your favorite burger accessories. Through a special technique, the inside of the top bun is scooped out before toasting to make more room for up to 13 toppings (all included in the price). A dozen options include bacon, cheese, sautéed mushrooms and fried onion strings, plus a "Lucky 13" option that changes daily. It could be as decadent as mac 'n' cheese or as crazy as fried bananas.

9540 Garland Rd.; 214-584-6261
4701 W. Park Blvd., Plano; 972-964-3844



Emmy burger at EMILY, Brooklyn, NY

Known for its killer wood-fired pizzas, Clinton Hill favorite EMILY is nearly equally acclaimed for its drool-worthy burger, which they only offer in limited quantity each night. This seriously juicy patty made with Fleisher's dry-aged beef is topped with Emmy sauce, charred onion, four-year Grafton cheddar and served dripping on a homemade bun with triple-cooked fries. Worth the trek to Brooklyn to be sure. Pro tip: On Sundays during lunch, EMILY serves unlimited burgers from 12–3 PM.

919 Fulton Street, Brooklyn; 347-844-9588

The Classic cheeseburger at The Grape Restaurant, Dallas, TX

Available only two days a week at Brian and Courtney Luscher's Lower Greenville American bistro, this longtime Big D favorite always wows diners (get it only during Sunday brunch and dinner on Sunday and Monday nights) and is totally worth scheduling, though, thanks to the divine combination of a belt-busting 10-oz. freshly ground beef patty, housemade peppered bacon, Vermont white cheddar, Nathan's horseradish half-sour pickles and Dijonnaise on a soft, toasty pain au lait bun.

2808 Greenville Ave.; 214-828-1981





Hodad's Ocean Beach, San Diego, CA

Hodad's Burgers is one of San Diego's original hot spots known for its handmade burger piled high with thick cut tomatoes, onions, pickles and lettuce with an option to add crispy bacon. With a history spanning 44 years, Hodad's well-earned reputation is evidenced by lines out the door at its Ocean Beach and Downtown locations plus a kiosk at Petco Park.

Must-try burger: If you want to go big, order the double bacon cheese basket that comes complete with hand-cut fries or onion rings. Smaller appetites should go for the equally delicious mini bacon cheeseburger — it's the same burger but scaled down.

5010 Newport Ave.; 619-224-4623

H&F burger at Holeman & Finch, Atlanta, GA

Arguably Atlanta's most influential, iconic burger, chef Linton Hopkins kicked off the trend of upscale restaurants looking to a classic American double stack. A housemade bun holds two crisp, juicy patties of a 50/50 blend of grass-fed brisket and chuck, pickles, thinly sliced onion, oozy American cheese and zippy ketchup and mustard, both made in-house. Offered in a limited quantity of two dozen per service (lunch, dinner and brunch), the burger's also available all the time at the burger-centric offshoot H&F Burger in the Ponce City Market food hall.

2277 Peachtree Rd NW; 404-948-1175



Hopdoddy burger bar, Austin, TX

There's a reason why Hopdoddy has gained a cult following in Austin. Actually, there are 13 reasons (because that's how many burger variations they offer)...plus fresh cut Kennebec fries, decadent milkshakes and a fine selection of craft beer and cocktails. That adds up to enough reasons to brave the line usually wrapped around the building.

Must-try burger: In addition to the tasty 13, there's always a super-creative daily special, like the Boss Hog with an Angus beef patty, BBQ pulled pork, applewood-smoked bacon, Tillamook cheddar, sweet mustard sauce and chipotle coleslaw.

Multiple locations

Kuma's Corner, Chicago, IL

In a lot of ways, Kuma's Corner was the forebear of the burger boom that has swept Chicago and the nation at large. Several years ago, the punk-rock burger bar opened in Avondale to instant fandom and long, incessant lines out the door. Patient customers are rewarded with behemoth burgers on decadent pretzel buns, each given a cheeky name and stacked to the ceiling with unusual toppings.

Must-try burger: The Lair of the Minotaur is a prime example of Kuma's novel creations. This one features a hefty beef patty heaped with caramelized onion, pancetta, Brie and bourbon-poached pear. Altogether, it's got the right combo of sweetness, savory, crispy and gooey.

2900 W. Belmont Ave.; 773-604-8769
666 W. Diversey Pkwy.; 773-472-2666



Kush in Miami, FL



From the guys that brought us LoKal in Coconut Grove, this Wynwood burger/beer joint serves grass-fed patties, alongside rotating and exclusive tap brews, in a funky, industrial-style space. You can't go wrong with the traditional LoKal burger topped with avocado, tomato and homemade honey mustard, or the Johnny Utah, topped with hot pastrami. And while the burgers are pricier than what you might see at a favorite chain (averaging out to \$13–\$14 each), the quality is legit and you won't leave feeling anything but satisfied.

Must-try burger: The Johnny Utah, topped with hot pastrami, secret sauce, tomato, lettuce, onions and cheddar.

2003 N. Miami Ave.; 305-576-4500

Grim burger at Lankford's Grocery & Market, Houston, TX

This classic Houston dive is famed for its burgers, whether basic or of the over-the-top variety. Open since 1938, the spot has been serving locals and quelling burger cravings almost every night of the week. Hit the ATM on the way as the spot is cash-only.

Must-try burger: Grim burger — this massive half-pound fresh beef puck comes laden with mac 'n' cheese, bacon, jalapeños, more cheese and a fried egg resting inside a locally baked bun.

88 Dennis St.; 713-522-9555



Tavern burger at Little Jack's Tavern, Charleston, SC

The Tavern burger is all about the beauty of restraint. While some burgers revel in excess, this petite patty is simple, which suggests that every part must be perfect. And it is. The patty is juicy with a nice char, the layer of melted American cheese covers the top of the burger and some of its curve, the sunchoke relish is sweet, and there is a sauce reminiscent of the best version of something from the double arches. All is served on a delightfully old-school, squishy sesame bun, and it appears both on the appetizer and dessert menu so diners can have two chances at making the right choice.

710 King Street, 843-531-6868



Bash-style burger Lure Fishbar, NYC

The SoHo eatery has won the New York City Wine and Food Festival's Burger Bash and its Miami counterpart, the SoBe Wine and Food Fest, a total of six times. The Bash Burger, created by chef Josh Capon (who has two winning burgers on this list) starts with a six-ounce patty that's basted in Dijon mustard through the grilling process, sandwiched between a brioche bun and coated with bacon and onion jam, pickles and a special sauce (mayo, ketchup, Sriracha and more). It's the "In-N-Out Burger-lover's fine-dining dream."

142 Mercer St.; 212-431-7676





Black Label burger at Minetta Tavern, NYC

The Black Label burger patty is made from a proprietary blend from Pat LaFrieda meat that's 50% 45-day dry-aged rib-eye. The other 50% is a mix of short rib, chuck, skirt steak and brisket. Sounds indulgent enough, right? Keith McNally's team goes above and beyond, basting it in butter before placing it on a sweet freshly baked Balthazar Bakery brioche. It's then topped with caramelized onions, lettuce, housemade pickles and tomato, and pommes frites come on the side.

113 Macdougall Street; 212-475-3850

Nick's Roast Beef Bar & Grille Old City, Philadelphia, PA

This Old City old-timer has a sandwich lineup that includes everything from reputable roast beef to breakfast cheesesteaks, meatballs and plenty more. But even with all of those options, Nick's burgers have remained fan favorites due to a not so secret ingredient — bacon ground into the patty mix.

Must-try burger: With topping combos like pepper Jack, barbecue and onion rings, or blue cheese, Bloody Mary ketchup and green olives, it's tempting to go over the top. But this burger is best enjoyed classically with lettuce, tomato and a choice of cheese.

16 S. Second St.; 215-928-9411



Slagel Farms beef burger at Owen & Engine, Chicago, IL

The all-American burger adapts a British accent at this charming staple on the eastern fringes of Logan Square, and it works wonderfully. There's not a lot on the burger, really, and there doesn't need to be when the quality is this top-tier. Made with farm-fresh, house-ground beef, each patty is succulent and tender, which lays a nice foundation for a bed of caramelized onions and malt-vinegar mayonnaise. It's all served on house-baked potato bap bread, just sturdy and doughy enough to hold up to the burger and soak up all those delicious juices.

2700 N. Western Ave.; 773-235-2930



Burger at Peter Luger Steak House, NYC

Made from chopped-up dry-aged steak, this no-frills patty from the iconic Brooklyn steakhouse is a longtime favorite. The humble option wins over diners with simple high-quality ingredients. And you must order it with cheese and the legendary bacon.

178 Broadway, Brooklyn; 718-387-7400



Cheeseburger at Petit Trois, LA



"It was the best cheeseburger I ever tasted," Lefebvre says about the famed Au Cheval cheeseburger in Chicago. When the chef was at the James Beard Awards in Chicago last year, he and wife Krissy ate in as many restaurants as they possibly could over the course of a few days. But that cheeseburger stuck with him. "I love cheeseburgers and always wanted to put one on the menu at Petit Trois," he says. "But I never had such a good one." He brought that inspiration back to LA and created his own masterpiece: a four-ounce prime beef patty topped with caramelized onions, American cheese and rich bordelaise sauce, which may have a little foie gras in it. It's now permanently on the menu as of this week. A great burger is all about the patty. "It's the meat," Lefebvre says. "The blend, the thickness. We tested a lot to find the right thickness. The patty needs to be juicy. We cook it medium rare to medium, any more and it won't be as juicy."

718 Highland Avenue; 323-468-8916

LPG cheeseburger at La Petite Grocery, New Orleans, LA

The Uptown hot spot has received national acclaim for its innovative take on Louisiana cuisine. But its burger is also worthy of national praise on its own. The LPG cheeseburger is topped with melted Gruyère, house pickles, onion marmalade, arugula, whole grain mustard, aioli and served with hand-cut fries.

4238 Magazine Street; 504-891-3377



Mushroom cheeseburger at Port of Call, New Orleans, LA

This funky dive in the Big Easy's French Quarter touts itself as the city's best burger, and there's some truth behind that claim. The hefty half-pound beef patty is ground fresh daily and topped with mushrooms and cheddar cheese. The best part? All its burgers come with sour cream-topped baked potatoes.

838 Esplanade Avenue; 504-523-0120



Ray's Hell burger, Washington, DC

If you've ever doubted that better ingredients make for a better burger, we say the proof is in the patty. Restaurateur Michael Landrum makes his with ground chuck, sirloin and leftover steak cuts from sister restaurant Ray's the Steaks and offers diners several choices of seasonings (like au poivre) and toppings (like roasted bone marrow). Not that this juicy grilled burger needs any gilding — it's both high-quality and a good value, and that goes for the steak and cheeses (found at the Arlington location), the milkshakes and the fried chicken sandwiches as well.

Must-try burger: Soul Burger No. 1 (six-oz. single for \$9.99; 12-oz. double for \$14.99) topped with bacon, Swiss, cognac-sherry mushrooms and grilled onion



650 Wilson Blvd., Arlington; 703-841-0001
449 K St. NW; no phone



Original Solly burger at Solly's Grille, Milwaukee, WI

If you've never had a butter burger at Solly's, you've never been to Milwaukee. They've been doing this decadent Wisconsin specialty here since opening in 1936 (read a griddled cheeseburger topped with butter). Here they use 100% freshly ground sirloin and Wisconsin creamery butter for an extra juicy finish.

4629 N. Port Washington Rd; 414-332-8808

Village Whiskey, Philadelphia, PA

Bulky burgers and an extensive selection of brown spirits and beer keep Jose Garces' burger and cocktail bar perennially packed. Whether you're going for a classic burger, Chicago dog or Kentucky hot brown, make sure to round out your order with a side of duck fat fries topped with cheddar beer sauce and braised short ribs.

Must-try burger: The foie gras and blue cheese topped Whiskey King is tempting, but the real star of the show here is the Village burger, served simply a slice of tomato, a leaf of bibb and a housemade Thousand Island.

118 S. 20th St.; 215-665-1088



WesBurger 'N' More, San Francisco, CA

For years, San Francisco burger fans had to keep Wednesday nights open for Wes Rowe's once-a-week burger pop-up, but no longer, as the burger maestro has taken the leap and opened a full-time restaurant in the Mission with a retro soda fountain vibe. Quirky sides (always be on the lookout for creative tater tots) and the city's best Nashville hot chicken sandwich are definitely worth a try. But let's not get ahead of ourselves: WesBurger is about the burgers. Rowe has fun with his burgers but takes the craft seriously. That is why they are making the country's best burgers.

Must-try burger: While specials continually rotate in and out (and are always worth trying) the signature Hot Wes has swiftly become one of the most important burgers in the Bay Area and is a beautiful ode to the Lone Star State from Rowe, who grew up in central Texas. The six-oz. burger gets a little heat and salt boost from queso sauce and pickled jalapeños, then sweetness and crunch from onion rings.

2240 Mission St.; 415-745-9371