

ZAGAT

The Best Burgers in 17 Cities

Burgers represent the culinary sign of the times. In the fast-food explosion of the last century, they were the icons of nuclear families, snatched up quickly at drive-thrus and gobbled down at home. Toward the turn of the century, they gained serious cred in the kitchen, with even chefs at world-class restaurants offering inventive, gourmet twists. These days? It's a little bit of everything, with the lines between high- and low-end becoming increasingly blurred. Read on to find out the No. 1 burger in 17 Zagat cities, as voted on by you in our 2015 Burger Survey, and click through to see the full list for each city.



Illegal Food

Burger | Virginia Highland

Atlanta, GA

A pop-up service out of the back of a barcade developed a cult following and grew into its own stand-alone restaurant focused on all things beefy. "A lot of love and know-how is crafted into every one of these burgers," and each week the meat is ground from one single cow sourced locally. Creative variations abound, from upscale to classic (fan-favorite the Hank recalls certain fast-food icons), but "you can't go wrong with any of the options." Don't miss the elaborate french fry creations, either.

Must-Order: The Hank (\$12 single, \$16 double).

[>See full Atlanta list](#)



Hopdoddy

Burger | SoCo (South Congress)

Austin, TX

There's a reason 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-Order: In addition to the tasty 13, there's always a super-creative daily special, like the recent Boss Hog with an Angus beef patty, BBQ pulled pork, applewood-smoked bacon, Tillamook cheddar, sweet mustard sauce and chipotle coleslaw. Prices range from \$6.25–\$12.25.

[>See full Austin list](#)



Craigie On Main

French | Cambridge

Boston, MA

It's legendary for a reason: the house burger is topped with mace ketchup and cheddar from Vermont's Shelburne Farm (add fried egg or bacon for a few extra bucks). This mythic patty that's "without peer" was also an early adopter of a buzz-engendering "limited quantities" approach that other restaurants have adopted too — only 18 are made each night.

Must-Order: The Craigie Burger (\$17).

[>See full Boston list](#)



Au Cheval

American | West Loop

Chicago, IL

This is hardly the first time this griddled burger was at the top of a "best burger" list and it won't be the last. Two smashed patties get generously covered in cheddar and Dijonnaise. It's messy but you can't help but keep eating it.

Must-Order: Single cheeseburger (\$11), which is, in fact, a double.

[>See full Chicago list](#)



Dugg Burger

Burger | Casa Linda

Dallas, TX

At this fast-casual burger joint in Casa Linda, you "don't have to pay extra for bacon, sautéed mushrooms or cheese" and the "re-engineering of the burger makes Dugg Burger stand out as the best." The "very novel concept" here involves the inside of the top bun being dug out to make room for a bounty of toppings, including a 13th option that's crowd-sourced and typically changes daily.

Must-Order: The sky's the limit. A burger with cheese and as many of their 13 toppings as you'd like can be had for just \$7. With fries and a drink, \$10.

[>See full Dallas-Fort Worth list](#)



Bud's Cafe & Bar

Sedalia

Denver, CO

"Unbelievably awesome" patties made with "superb meat" are the siren song of this decades-old, no-frills roadhouse in Sedalia that nabbed the No. 1 spot on our survey. The juicy burgers, topped simply with American cheese and sided with pickles and onions, take a minimalist approach, and the joint doesn't serve fries, but that doesn't stop fans from deeming it a "burger paradise."

Must-Order: A double cheeseburger \$6.70 (or \$6.80 if you get it to go).

>See full Denver list



The Republic Grille

American | The Woodlands

Houston, TX

The Republic Grille has become The Woodlands' go-to for Southern cuisine including "great, big, juicy burgers" that don't stray too far out of the box. Grilled Angus beef burgers come with fries or onion rings with a range of "outstanding" carb-loving bun options, including jalapeño-cheese, pretzel, white, wheat, or lettuce wrap.

Must-Order: The Republic Burger (\$11) stacked with fixings and a choice of American, provolone, Swiss, blue cheese or cheddar.

>See full Houston list



Pono Burger

Burger | Santa Monica

Los Angeles, CA

Set in a Quonset hut, a funky corrugated metal WWII relic, Pono Burger in Santa Monica has a decidedly island vibe (chef and owner Windy "Makani" Gerardi is a Kona native) with a strong California sensibility. The organic grass-fed beef, turkey and vegetarian patties are all cooked on a wood-burning grill, served on soft brioche buns, and topped with organic, often seasonal, fresh ingredients (nothing's frozen). Gerardi's philosophy on what makes his burger "great" is simple: each component should be good enough to eat by itself, and eaten together should make one great taste.

Must-Order: The Paniolo burger (\$14), an organic beef patty topped with smoked English cheddar, Niman Ranch bacon, Kona coffee-bourbon barbecue sauce and buttermilk-battered onion rings

[>See full Los Angeles list](#)



Bowery Meat Company

Steakhouse | East Village

New York, NY

Restaurateur John McDonald (Lure Fishbar) and chef Josh Capon opened this '60s-inspired East Village steakhouse last fall. 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.

Must-Order: Cheeseburger (\$22).

[>See full Manhattan list](#)



Peter Luger Steak House

Steakhouse | Williamsburg

Brooklyn, NY

Made from chopped-up dry-aged steak, this no-frills patty from the iconic Brooklyn steakhouse is "simply the best." The humble patty wins over diners with simple high-quality ingredients. And you must order it with cheese and the legendary bacon. Our voters' only criticism is that it's "not offered at dinner."

Must-Order: Burger (\$12.95), available at lunch only.

[>See full Brooklyn/Queens list](#)



Jr's Gourmet Burgers

Burger | Miami Springs

Miami, FL

The "inventive and excellent" burgers at this casual Miami Springs stop lead the competition. Hand-pressed Angus beef patties are matched with toppings like wild mushrooms (shiitake, porcini, oyster, etc.) and grilled onions coated with Swiss cheese. Insider tip: the crowd-pleasing Lady Guava burger is slated to return this month after a hiatus in honor of the restaurant's fifth anniversary.

Must-Order: Wild mushroom burger (\$8.85–\$9.99).

[>See full Miami list](#)



The Blue Duck

New American | Northeast Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA

This Northeast newcomer has won plenty of accolades for its no-nonsense house-ground patty piled onto a soft brioche bun with LTO and a swipe of garlicky mayo. The burger might be "just pure awesome" on its own, but adding a side of salt-and-pepper fries (with housemade cheddar sauce!) is a boss move.

Must-Order: If a burger craving strikes during breakfast hours, Blue Duck has you covered with the Pork Roll Burger (\$10), a blend of beef and pork roll with American cheese, sunny-side up egg and Sriracha mayo on a classic Martin's potato roll.

[>See full Philadelphia list](#)



Wes Burger

NoPa

SF/Bay Area, CA

Wes Rowe, local burger brawl champ, takes over the kitchen every Wednesday

at Divisadero's Mojo Bicycle Café and creates one burger made one way each week. It's the toppings recalling Rowe's Texan roots that really spice things up like fried onions, jalapeño and queso. The only constant is Wes Burger's signature all-brisket hamburger patty, ground coarsely and cooked in a cast-iron skillet, which delivers a crispy, seasoned crust while not sacrificing a juicy, rare middle.

Must-Order: Whatever Wes is Cookin'! (\$13)

>See full Bay Area list



Duke's Grocery

British | Dupont Circle

Washington, DC

This British-inspired Dupont favorite has won legions of fans with its decadent burgers that start with two patties of Creekstone Farms Angus beef and end with a buttery brioche bun. The Proper Burger had several survey responders calling it the "best burger ever." It's already pretty over the top, but you can add such items as a runny egg, pâté, smashed avocado or white truffle oil for \$2–\$3 extra. Be warned that there are no french fries, and diners have only two choices of doneness: medium rare or well done.

Must-Order: The Proper Burger

(called the Brunchie Burger at brunch; \$11) topped with two slices of Gouda, house dills, charred red onion, Thai sweet chile sauce, arugula and garlic aioli.

>See full DC list



Rocky's Crown Pub

Burger | Pacific Beach

San Diego, CA

San Diego's favorite burger for the year comes from this Pacific Beach bar. Readers cite that the third- or half-pound burgers (with cheese or without) are "by far the best" in the city. And we couldn't agree more. Purists will appreciate the no-fuss approach incorporating a beefy grilled patty simply dressed with American cheese, lettuce, tomato and pickle. But go early and bring cash. Wait times for the "phenom burger" can be long but are "worth the wait."

Must-Order: Half-pound cheeseburger, \$7.50.

>See full San Diego list



The Swinery

Butcher Shop | West Seattle

Seattle, WA

At this tiny West Seattle butcher shop, one thing you won't find in the display cases is the "expertly prepared" burger.

Must-Order: The Swinery burger (\$11) is made with one-third pound of fluffy in-house ground beef, creamy caramelized onions and housemade crunchy pickles. Pick your cheese — there's cheddar, provolone, blue or Swiss — and always get the Swinery sauce. Add house-cured bacon (\$2) or crispy pork belly (\$3) for even more meaty goodness.

>See full Seattle list



Holy Chuck

Burger | Midtown

Toronto, Canada

From a single junior cheeseburger (\$5.99) to the Go Chuck Yourself (\$21.99), a tower of three double bacon cheeseburgers stacked between two grilled cheese sandwiches, this restaurant's "unique" burger menu runs the gamut. Patty options include lamb, all-bacon and veggie; "so many choices, it's a flavor explosion."

Must-Order: The Farmers Threesome: a lamb patty, a beef patty and a bacon patty topped with cheese, bacon and caramelized onions (\$12.99).

>See full Toronto list