



The beef burger with pepper jack, lettuce, onion, tomato, pickle and a specialty topping: fried green tomatoes. Nick Rallo

Dugg Is Still Making Phenomenal Burgers for Under \$10

NICK RALLO | DECEMBER 11, 2018

The challenge was elegantly simple: How do you toast the divot left in the crown of a hollowed-out bun? They asked themselves: Do we jet a flame right into the buttered dent? A top bun glazed in butter, the white bread's sugars charred from grill heat, toasting until a blackened rim forms on the bun's edge, provides texture and crunch to counter the flat, chew consistency of untoasted, squishy white bread. The idea was to reduce the breadiness by removing the middle of the bun's crown, leaving a cavern in the middle of toppings. By toasting the whole thing, including the divot, golden brown, the top bun gets thinner and crunchier in all the nooks and crannies.

Then, Dugg's owners found someone, who Dugg's partner Jeff Braunstein calls "the machinist," who could construct the perfect bun toaster. The machinist had a government contract at the time, Braunstein says, but in another corner of his shop he crafted a one-of-a-kind bun toaster.

Dugg's burger grill looks like it was built by Tony Stark. Standing in front of the register, your finger extended to the hieroglyph of the burger on the menu above (the menu is as simple as a kid's book), you'll see smooth, Iron Man-shiny speed bumps running along one side of the griddle. The buns are lightly buttered, pressed into those smoking hot speed bumps to toast the whole thing from divot and edge. It's a ingenious component to a shockingly good —especially for the price — burger that's delivered in what's likely the same amount of time it'd take a super villain to arm a Tomahawk missile.

“There's been lots of opportunities to make our menu more complicated,” Braunstein says. They opened their first Dugg Burger in February 2015. A second location followed in Plano the year after that.



The speed bump-looking shapes are designed uniquely to toast the crater left in the bun's crown. Dugg Burger

The burger patty, a 75 percent chuck blend with 25 percent fat, screams on the flat top while you walk the toppings line. Dugg orders a bulk grind from local purveyor Freedmen's and hand-forms the disc shape to keep the fat from rendering. Each burger shows up dusted by salt, pepper and Worcestershire powder. While the beef sears itself a crust from its own beautiful fat, you walk the line as Dugg piles toppings onto the bun. Bacon, sauteed mushrooms and lettuce, dressed with hits of vinegar, are smart options. As fast as an explosion, a tray shows up with your fully constructed cheeseburger.

Nearly four years after opening Dugg's first location (in White Rock's Casa Linda Plaza), Braunstein remembers his old gig in L.A. He was written for TV, bouncing around as a writer's assistant on King of the Hill and then in the writer's room for a 2000 show called Strip Mall. Then, he did what we'd all do when we're stressed about finding new work: He went to Taco Bell. He worked at Taco Bell corporate, through Yum! Brands, until it was time for him and his partners to simply things. Cheeseburgers was the dream more than Crunchwraps.

A fried chicken sandwich, brined and buttermilk-bathed with that salt, pepper and that Worcestershire powder seasoning blend, was added to the menu in recent years. Other than brined bird, few things have changed since 2015. We're thankful. Dugg's sandwiches clock in at less than 10 bucks. They're mercifully simple and huge on flavor. Bacon is crisp as tree bark, and the zip of vinegar tunes the richness of beef and cheese. Order a classic cheeseburger, add some bacon and squirts of mustard. It's reliability in an uneasy time. It's fast food as it's meant to be.

Fast food doesn't need to be more than a lighthouse that you can find among the choppy seas of who and what's "the best." Sometimes you just want a Tomahawk missile of a burger — explosive and hot and right now.

Dugg Burger, 9540 Garland Road (East Dallas)