

# How to Grill Burgers

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Grilling burgers is fun and easy if you follow a few simple guidelines. These tips will get you on the right track to picking the best meat, forming burger patties, and grilling them on a stovetop, gas grill, or charcoal grill. Gather some creative seasonings and toppings to create delicious burgers for a summer party or a relaxing night in.

## Things You'll Need

- ☐ Spatula
- ☐ Grill
- ☐ Skillet
- ☐ Bowl

## Ingredients

- ☐ 2 lbs Ground beef
- ☐ Seasoning, such as salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, steak sauce, barbecue sauce, onion (optional)
- ☐ Cheese (optional)
- ☐ 8 hamburger buns

*Serves 8*

## Method 1 of 5: Preparing your Burger Patties



**1 Buy quality meat.** Start with the right kind of meat and you're well on your way to making a delicious burger. For any type of grilling, you want to start with fresh quality meat. If possible, ask your butcher to grind the meat for you while you wait. Look for 75 to 80 percent lean for the juiciest burgers.[1]

- You can choose leaner meat if you prefer. Leaner meat isn't ideal for burgers as they are often cooked at very high temperatures. Meat with a low fat content can become dry when grilled.
- If you can't get freshly ground beef, choose beef with a bright pink color. Ground meat that is starting to turn gray has likely been sitting on the shelf longer.
- Try ground chicken or turkey if you are looking to avoid beef.
- You can also use pre-formed frozen burger patties.



**2 Season your fresh ground beef.** Crumble 2 lbs (32 ounces) of ground beef into a large bowl and sprinkle in about 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp black pepper. Use your hands to mix the ground beef and take care not to overwork the meat. Gently toss the ground meat until the seasonings are just combined.

- Handle the meat as little as possible. The heat from your hands can actually melt the fat of the burger resulting in a denser patty.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Vary the amount of seasoning based on your preference. Try adding some ground sage or chili powder.
- If you have started with frozen patties, you can season them as they cook.



**3 Form your patties.** Grab about 1/4 pound (6 ounces) of ground beef and shape it into a ball in your hands. Carefully flatten it between your palms until it's about 3/4 of an inch thick (1.3 cm). Flattening your patty evenly as possible.

- Use your thumb or a spoon to make a shallow indentation (about 1 and 1/2 inches wide) in the center of your patty. This can help your patty cook more evenly and prevent it from puffing up in the center.
- Your patty will shrink a little when cooking. Use your hamburger buns as a reference and form the patties to extend just a little bit past the diameter of the buns. This will create even patties that better fit your buns when cooked.

Method  
2

## Method 2 of 5: Grilling Burgers on a Charcoal Grill



**1 Arrange the coals.** Configure your coals into a two-zone fire. This means that you will cast your coals to cover about half of the grill to produce medium to high-temperature zones.

- You can use any coals for grilling. Self-lighting coals are generally easier to work with.





**2 Light your charcoal.** Use a match or lighter to light the edge of a few of the coals. The flame will spread to the other coals in the pile.<sup>[3]</sup>



**3 Light your coals with lighter fluid (optional).** If your coals call for lighter fluid, carefully squirt lighter fluid on the top and sides of the charcoal mound. Squirt the lighter fluid gently and wait a minute or two for the fluid to sink into the coals. This will prevent all the lighter fluid from burning off immediately. After waiting a minute, squirt a second layer, followed by a third before lighting your coals. Avoid squirting lots of lighter fluid into your coals during each application. Less fluid is better than more. Lighter fluid can add a chemical taste to your burgers if you use too much.<sup>[4]</sup>

- It doesn't take a lot of lighter fluid to get your fire going. You will only need about 1.6 ounces of lighter fluid per pound of charcoal.



**4 Let the coals heat up.** Your coals need time to produce heat and won't be ready immediately after lighting them. Wait for the flames to subside and the edges of the coals turn a light gray. Your coals should be covered completely with gray ash after about 10 minutes. Now you can grill your burgers.



**5 Grill your burgers.** Add your patties to the grill and sear them directly over the pile of coals. This is the hottest part of the grill. Cook your patties for about 5 minutes or until they are brown and crispy at the bottom.

- Avoid charring the meat and pressing it down with a spatula. This will squeeze all the delicious juices out.
- During the cooking process, you will see flare-ups. Don't be alarmed. Flare-ups result from fat dripping into the flame. Move the burgers to the cooler side of the grill if the flames get too high. Move them back when the flames go down.



**6 Flip your burgers.** Use a long-handled metal spatula to flip your burgers once. Sear the other side on the hot part of the grill for about 1 minute to lock in the juices.



**7 Make it a cheeseburger (optional).** Now that your burgers are in their final stage of cooking, it's the perfect time to add a slice of cheese and allow it to melt to perfection. Place your cheese slice centered on each patty and continue to cook your patty as the cheese melts.





**8 Toast your buns (optional).** Toasting buns is quick and easy. Simply split your buns open and place them on the grill with the cut side down. Make sure to place them on the cooler side of the grill to keep them from burning or cooking too quickly. Grill your buns for about 10 seconds and flip if desired.<sup>[5]</sup>

- You can lightly butter the inside of your buns before toasting if you'd like.
- Watch the buns closely as they can burn easily.



**9 Cover and cook.** Once you have seared your patties, move the burgers onto the cooler side of the grill, so they are no longer over direct heat and cover the grill with a lid. Continue cooking for 3 to 5 minutes until done. Here are two ways to check your burgers:

- Remove one burger and cut into it. For medium-rare, the inside should be pinkish, but not bloody.
- Use an instant-read meat thermometer. The USDA recommends an internal temperature of 160 °F (71 °C).





**10** **Enjoy!** Take your burgers off the grill as soon as they are done to avoid overcooking. Remember that they will cook a little bit after they are taken from the grill. Serve your burgers with a variety of condiments

Method  
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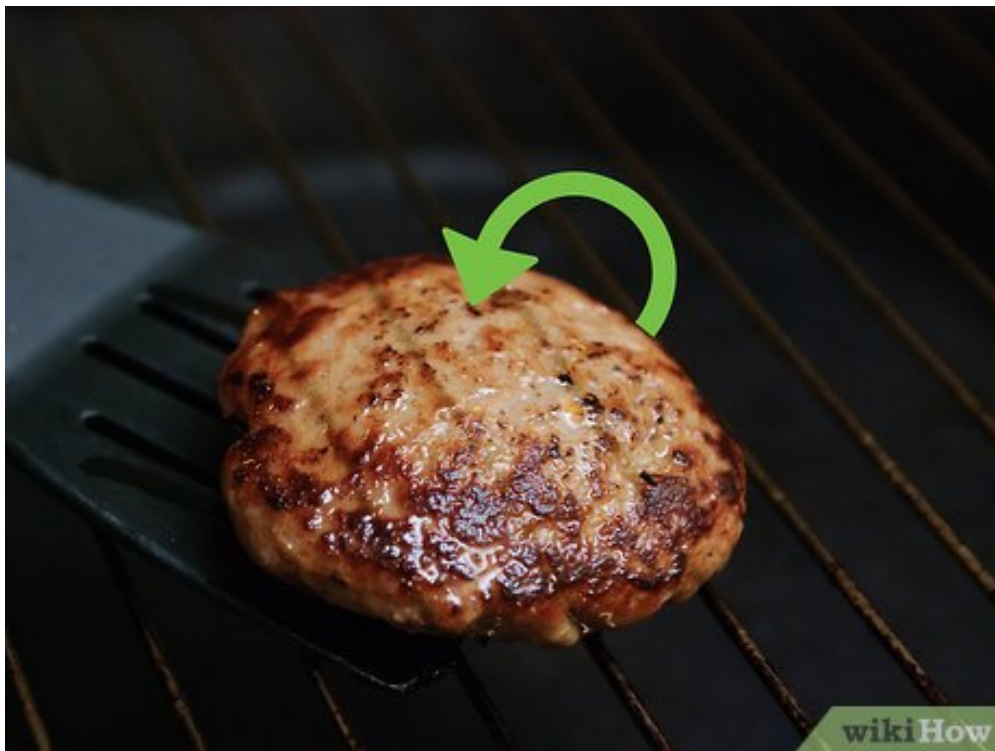
### Method 3 of 5: Grilling Burgers on a Gas Grill



**1** **Preheat your grill.** Ignite your grill and turn the heat to high. Close the lid and give your grill about 10 to 15 minutes to get hot. Scrape the hot grill rack clean with a wire brush. Brush the hot rack of your grill with oil to prevent sticking (optional).



- 2 Grill your burgers.** Place your patties into the grill and sear on one side for about 3 minutes. Avoid pressing down on your burgers while they are grilling.
- You may see flare-ups during cooking. Flare-ups are caused by the burger fat dripping into the flames below. Carefully move your patties to a higher rack or cooler side of the grill until the flames subside.
  - On a gas grill, you will find the cooler areas on higher racks, or along the edges of your grill, away from the flame.



**3 Flip your patties.** Using a metal spatula with a long handle, flip your patties and sear them on the other side to lock in the juices. Continue grilling until you have reached your desired doneness. Here are some guidelines to consider:

- Cook for about 3 1/2 minutes for medium-rare. Your burger is done when you reach an internal temperature of 130 to 135° F (55 to 57° C).
- Cook for 4 minutes for medium. Your burger is done when you reach an internal temperature of 135 to 150° F (57 to 65° C).
- Cook for 4 minutes or longer for medium well. Your burger is done when you reach an internal temperature of 150 to 165° F (65 to 74° C).
- Your burger is well done when it's internal temperature reaches 165° F (74° C) or greater. [6] Serve immediately.
- Add cheese to your burgers in the last minute or so of the cooking process so the cheese has sufficient time to melt.
- Toast your buns on a cooler side of the grill or a higher rack during the last minute of grilling. Lightly butter the inside of the buns if desired.

## Method 4 of 5: Grilling Burgers on the Stove



**1 Preheat your skillet.** Cast-iron skillets are recommended for the best results, but you can use any frying pan you have.<sup>[7]</sup>

- If you are using a cast-iron pan, you can speed up the heating process by placing it into a preheated 350° F (176° C) oven for about 20 minutes and removing it with an oven mitt. Starting with a piping hot cast-iron pan is key.



**2 Test the heat of your pan.** Add a small amount of cooking oil to the pan. Don't use more than 1 tablespoon (0.5 ounces). If your oil smokes, your pan is a little too hot. Take it off the burner for a couple minutes and try again. When the beads of oil spread evenly and shine, the pan is ready for cooking!





**3 Grill your burger.** Place your patty in the middle of the pan and let it cook. Your burger patty will sizzle once it hits the pan and it might even smoke. This is good. Cook it for about 4 minutes.

- Resist the urge to poke and prod at your patty. Don't push it down into the pan. Leaving your patty alone will allow for it to form a delicious thick crust that will seal in the flavor.



- 4 Flip your burger.** Once and only once, when you see the underside starting to turn brown, flip your burger. Cook for an additional 4 minutes on the other side.
- The last few minutes of cooking is the perfect time to add a slice of cheese. Place a slice of cheese onto your patty and let it get perfectly melted in the last minute or so of cooking.
  - Your burger is medium-rare at an internal temperature of 130 to 135° F (55 to 57° C).
  - Your burger is medium at an internal temperature of 135 to 150° F (57 to 65° C).
  - Your burger is medium well at an internal temperature of 150 to 165° F (65 to 74° C).
  - Your burger is well done at an internal temperature of 165° F (74° C) or greater.

## Method 5 of 5: Adding Variations



- 1 Get creative with the meat.** You can try ground turkey, chicken, or even buy an Italian sausage; cut it open, and use the seasoned meat mixture inside to form your patties.
  - If you are using chicken, turkey, or extra lean meat, mix a few bread crumbs into the patties to help them hold together better on the grill.
  - You can even mix diced onion, garlic, or bell pepper into your patties. Get as creative as you want!



**2 Season the meat.** Add sauces or other seasonings to the patties before cooking. Experiment with plain burgers or try adding your favorite flavors before cooking. Here are some classic burger seasonings many people enjoy (try adding just a few tsp. or 0.5 ounces when learning how much you like; you don't want to over-season):

- Salt and pepper
- Finely chopped onion
- Soy sauce
- Worcestershire sauce
- Barbecue sauce
- Steak sauce





**3 Go crazy with toppings.** Make sure you have the usual toppings, like lettuce, tomato, onion, and pickles. Don't stop there. Try grilling some mushrooms, bell pepper, or onions. Add some sliced avocado or jalapeño peppers. The options are almost endless. Get as creative as you want.



**4 Experiment with a variety of condiments.** Condiments can make the same burger patty into a totally new taste experience. Popular choices for a beef burger include ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, barbecue sauce, hot sauce, or even steak sauce.



**5 Use wood chips in your charcoal grill.** Toss a handful of Black Cherry chips onto your charcoals once they get hot. This will give your burgers a smoky taste. If you are using a gas grill, place Black Cherry chunks on the grilling surface, not the flame. Or, using an aluminum pie plate with holes punched in it, fill with black cherry chips and put on grilling surface.

- Many people prefer the flavor of meat grilled over hardwood charcoal to traditional briquettes.



**6** Finished.



## Tips

- Don't let anyone tell you what to put on your burger, make it the way you like it!
- Remember, touch the meat as little as possible when forming the patties and avoid poking or pushing it during the cooking process.
- Grilled foods are great for diets. They are lower in fat than many other cooking methods and taste great!
- Take care not to crush the burger when cutting into it before serving.
- When using a meat thermometer to check your burgers, follow these temperature guidelines: Medium rare: 130 to 135° F (55 to 57° C), medium: 135 to 150° F (57 to 65° C), medium well: 150 to 165° F (65 to 74° C), well done: 165° F (74° C) or greater.[8]



## Warnings

- Always wash your hands before and after handling raw meat.
- Never squirt lighter fluid onto flaming or hot coals.
- If imbibing while grilling, make sure not to spill highly flammable spirits over the fire.
- Avoid under-cooking ground beef to protect against possible food-borne illnesses.
- Do not add lighter fluid or match-light charcoal while food is on the grill.
- Beware of allowing raw meat, or anything raw meat has touched, to come in contact with other surfaces. The USDA recommends that all ground meat be cooked to at least medium, to an internal temperature of 165 °F (74 °C). If you prefer your burgers medium-rare, go to extra lengths to ensure that your meat is fresh and from a trustworthy source.

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