

Burger Kings

Beef. It's definitely what's for dinner at these fab burger joints popping up all over town.

By Sarah Gleim

Gourmet hamburger joints popped up all over town this summer. Perhaps it was Richard Blais' Flip Burger Boutique on Howell Mill that kicked off the craze a few years ago. He did take the backyard burger and elevate it to, well, practically fine dining standards with his menu of unusual burger and topping combinations.

But, most recently, we've seen the addition of several new restaurants (some from our city's better-known chefs) devoted entirely to the burger. And there are even more burger-only restaurant openings on the way, including a new Flip location in Buckhead, and a second location of the wildly popular Grindhouse Killer Burger is finally under construction on Piedmont across the street from Fat Matt's. It's expected to open late this year. So what is it with the burger craze that's taken over the ATL? We wanted to find out, so we pigged out on burgers at five of the most popular joints across town.

GOOGIE BURGER

Forget about packing a picnic on your next outing to Centennial Olympic Park. The popular downtown destination is now home to Googie Burger, named for the iconic architecture of the new walk-up hamburger eatery. It's located adjacent to the park's popular Fountain of Rings, so it will undoubtedly draw hungry crowds of park-goers lounging on the lawn this fall. The burgers are hand-formed, seasoned and cooked to order, then served on a griddled potato roll. The Classic Googie burger is pretty basic and topped with lettuce, tomato and American cheese, plus Googie's signature sauce. But for something a bit more interesting, try the Beefy Pig burger, which is essentially the Classic burger plus smoked pork, bacon and mustard sauce. Googie Burger also offers several yummy dessert options, including spiked shakes—think Twinkie, PB&J or vanilla vodka and crème de banana—as well as freshly squeezed lemonade, beer and wine. Centennial Olympic Park at Andrew Young International Boulevard and Marietta Street, 404.223.4664, googieburger.com.



The Classic Googie burger is a big hit with Centennial Olympic Park-goers.

Wine & Dine



Shaun Doty definitely has another hit on his hands with YEAH! Burger.

YEAH! BURGER

The latest venture from Atlanta chef Shaun Doty is YEAH! Burger, which features a menu of burgers made in-house from local grass-fed beef, Colorado grass-fed bison, and both naturally raised chicken and turkey. The menu here is designed so you can completely customize your burger, right down to the type of H&F Bread Company bun. It even offers a gluten-free white bun for an additional \$1.25. Delish combinations we've tried include the beef burger with lettuce, tomato, grilled onions, Swiss cheese and bacon jam (yum!), plus a bison burger with bleu cheese and bacon. And even though we're technically talking about hamburgers here, YEAH! Burger has by far the best turkey burger we've ever tried. The patty is perfectly seasoned (the secret ingredient is tarragon) and grilled so it's moist and full of flavor. Pair any of the burgers with one of the signature cocktails created especially for the burger joint, but save room for an ice cream shake, float or concrete—all made with soft-serve ice cream from the Straus Family Creamery in California. YEAH! Burger is currently just one of two restaurants in the country serving this tasty organic ice cream. 1168 Howell Mill Road, Suite E, 404.496.4393, yeahburger.com. (A second location in Virginia Highland is scheduled to open Oct. 21.)

FARM BURGER

Decaturites rejoiced when Farm Burger finally opened on West Ponce in May. It's owned by George Frangos and Jason Mann, who is a partner of the restaurant Farm 255 in Athens and is the director of two farm operations: Full Moon Farms and Moonshine Meats. Farm Burger also features a menu of 100-percent, grass-fed, locally sourced beef burgers with gourmet toppings. The beef comes from Mann's farms, where the cows are never given hormones or antibiotics or fed grain, and then it's dry-aged and ground fresh on site. The burger selection includes "blackboard burgers" like The Farm Burger (topped with grafton smoked white cheddar, caramelized onions and Farm Burger sauce) and the Burger Banh Mi (their take on the Vietnamese sandwich). Those more adventurous can build their own burgers, piling on a slew of toppings—everything from lettuce, tomato and pickles to oxtail marmalade, fried farm eggs and roasted bone marrow. So far, it's one of the best burgers we've tried. 410b W. Ponce de Leon, 404.378.5077, farmburger.net.

Farm Burger is a huge hit in Decatur, so expect a wait if you want one of these hamburgers.



Farm Burger photo by Sara Hanna. YEAH! Burger photo by Sarah Dorio.

US CAFE

This burger spot has been a favorite in Smyrna for more than 23 years, and it finally set up shop inside the Perimeter at Lindbergh Vista in Buckhead a few months ago. It's a family-owned operation that builds its burgers with premium Black Angus beef from Creekstone Farms in Kansas. They're offered in quarter- and half-pound patties, topped with lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, mustard and mayo, but you can customize yours with a slew of additional toppings like grilled onions, jalapeños, chili, bacon, mushrooms and cheese, and spice it up with any of US Cafe's wing sauces. US Cafe also serves quarter- and half-pound Jennie-O turkey burgers, plus veggie and black bean burgers. And there's a full bar offering draught beer and wine, plus free Wi-Fi, pool tables and flat-screen TVs. 2591 Piedmont Road, Suite 102, 404.233.2233, uscafe.net.



US Cafe has been popular in Smyrna for 23 years and finally set up shop in Buckhead a few months ago.

THE COUNTER

Even though The Counter in Roswell isn't actually new (it opened two years ago), we still had to include it because it's such a unique concept and a tasty burger. The menu is designed so diners make every decision about how to build their own burger; and with the plethora of burger sizes and meat options, toppings, buns, cheeses, and sauces to choose from, the restaurant claims you can create more than 312,000 different combinations. Talk about a selection. We happen to love the beef burger topped with fried onion strings, avocado, Provolone cheese and chipotle aioli. But with toppings like carrot strings, roasted corn and black bean salsa, grilled pineapple, and even dried cranberries, The Counter is definitely the place for letting your burger imagination run wild. It's also one of very few places where they'll actually cook your burger to order blood rare, a testimony to how fresh their beef really is. 850 Mansell Road, 678.461.9661, thecounterburger.com.



You can create more than 312,000 different burger combinations at The Counter.

US Cafe photo by Garnish Photography and courtesy of Green Olive Media.

The Other Best Burgers

THE VORTEX has been serving up some of the city's best burgers for nearly two decades. thevortexbarandgrill.com

If you haven't dined on a Ghetto Burger from the world-famous **ANN'S SNACK BAR**, you're missing out. It's one of the most delicious burgers in the country, and watching Miss Ann in action makes the always-long experience absolutely worth it. 404.687.9207

The eccentric menu at **FLIP BURGER** makes it one of the most popular burger spots in town. flipburgerboutique.com

Virginia Highland has been home to **GEORGE'S BAR & RESTAURANT** since 1961. And George's Famous Burger will always rank tops with us. georgesbarandrestaurant.com

Believe it or not, **TED'S MONTANA GRILL** is still our favorite spot to chow down on one of the city's best bison burgers. tedsmontanagrill.com

It's hard to find a burger comparable to the Prime-Japanese Wagyu Burger they grind to order at **KEVIN RATHBUN STEAK**. We think it's to die for. kevinrathbunsteak.com

The signature burger stack at **BOCADO** is also another cheeseburger in town that we grade an A-plus. bocadoatlanta.com

The insanely delish burgers at **GRIND-HOUSE KILLER BURGERS** always make a trip to the Sweet Auburn Market extra special. grindhouseburgers.com

HOLEMAN & FINCH's famous double-patty cheeseburger has a veritable cult following and can be hard to get your hands on. That's because only 24 of the burgers are offered each night and are not available until 10 p.m. holeman-finch.com ▶