

ORIGIN

As versions of the meal have been served for over a century, its origin remains obscure.[6] The 1758 edition of the book *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* by Hannah Glasse included a recipe in 1758 as "Hamburgh sausage", which suggested to serve it "roasted with toasted bread under it." A similar snack was also popular in Hamburg by the name "Rundstück warm" ("bread roll warm") in 1869 or earlier,[7] and supposedly eaten by many emigrants on their way to America, but may have contained roasted beefsteak rather than Frikadeller. It has been suggested that Hamburg steak served between two pieces of bread and frequently eaten by Jewish passengers travelling from Hamburg to New York on Hamburg America Line vessels (which began operations in 1847) became so well known that the shipping company gave its name to the dish.[8] Each of these may mark the invention of the hamburger and explain the name.

There is a reference to a "Hamburg steak" as early as 1884 in the *Boston Journal*. [OED, under "steak"] On July 5, 1896, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* made a highly specific claim regarding a "hamburger sandwich" in an article about a "Sandwich Car": "A distinguished favorite, only five cents, is Hamburger steak sandwich, the meat for which is kept ready in small patties and 'cooked while you wait' on the gasoline range." [9]

Claims of invention

The origin of the hamburger is unclear, though "hamburger steak sandwiches" have been advertised in U.S. newspapers from New York to Hawaii since at least the 1890s.[10] The invention of hamburgers is commonly attributed to various people, including Charlie Nagreen, Frank and Charles Menches, Oscar Weber Bilby, Fletcher Davis, or Louis Lassen.[11][12] White Castle traces the origin of the hamburger to Hamburg, Germany, with its invention by Otto Kuase.[13] Some have pointed to a recipe for "Hamburgh sausages" on toasted bread, published in *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* by Hannah Glasse in 1747.[10] Hamburgers gained national recognition in the U.S. at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair when the *New York Tribune* referred to the hamburger as "the innovation of a food vendor on the pike." [12] No conclusive argument has ended the dispute over invention. An article from ABC News sums up: "One problem is that there is little written history. Another issue is that the spread of the burger happened largely at the World's Fair, from tiny vendors that came and went in an instant. And it is entirely possible that more than one person came up with the idea at the same time in different parts of the country." [14]

Louis Lassen

Although debunked by *The Washington Post*, [10] a popular myth recorded by Connecticut Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro stated the first hamburger served in America was by Louis Lassen, a Danish immigrant, after he opened Louis' Lunch in New Haven in 1895.[15] Louis' Lunch, a small lunch wagon in New Haven, Connecticut, is said to have sold the first hamburger and steak sandwich in the U.S. in 1900.[16][17][18] *New York Magazine* states that "The dish actually had no name until some rowdy sailors from Hamburg named the meat on a bun after themselves years later," also noting that this claim is subject to dispute.[19] A customer ordered

a quick hot meal and Louis was out of steaks. Taking ground beef trimmings, Louis made a patty and grilled it, putting it between two slices of toast.[12] Some critics such as Josh Ozersky, a food editor for New York Magazine, claim that this sandwich was not a hamburger because the bread was toasted.[20]

Charlie Nagreen

One of the earliest claims comes from Charlie Nagreen, who in 1885 sold a meatball between two slices of bread at the Seymour Fair[21] now sometimes called the Outagamie County Fair.[20] The Seymour Community Historical Society of Seymour, Wisconsin, credits Nagreen, now known as "Hamburger Charlie", with the invention. Nagreen was 15 when he reportedly sold pork sandwiches at the 1885 Seymour Fair, made so customers could eat while walking. The Historical Society explains that Nagreen named the hamburger after the Hamburg steak with which local German immigrants were familiar.[22][23]

Otto Kuase

According to White Castle, Otto Kuase was the inventor of the hamburger. In 1891, he created a beef patty cooked in butter and topped with a fried egg. German sailors later omitted the fried egg.[12]

Oscar Weber Bilby

The family of Oscar Weber Bilby claims the first-known hamburger on a bun was served on July 4, 1891, on Grandpa Oscar's farm. The bun was a yeast bun.[24][25][26] In 1995, Governor Frank Keating proclaimed that the first true hamburger on a bun was created and consumed in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1891, calling Tulsa, "The Real Birthplace of the Hamburger".[27]

Frank and Charles Menches

A bacon cheeseburger, from a New York City diner

Frank and Charles Menches claim to have sold a ground beef sandwich at the Erie County Fair in 1885 in Hamburg, New York.[20] During the fair, they ran out of pork sausage for their sandwiches and substituted beef.[21] The brothers exhausted their supply of sausage, so they purchased chopped-up beef from a butcher, Andrew Klein. Historian Joseph Streamer wrote that the meat was from Stein's market, not Klein's, despite Stein's having sold the market in 1874.[21] The story notes that the name of the hamburger comes from Hamburg, New York, not Hamburg, Germany.[21] Frank Menches's obituary in The New York Times states that these events took place at the 1892 Summit County Fair in Akron, Ohio.[28]

Fletcher Davis

Fletcher Davis of Athens, Texas claimed to have invented the hamburger. According to oral histories, in the 1880s, he opened a lunch counter in Athens and served a 'burger' of fried ground beef patties with mustard and Bermuda onion between two slices of bread, with a pickle on the side.[12] The story is that in 1904, Davis and his wife Ciddy ran a sandwich stand at the St. Louis World's Fair.[12] Historian Frank X. Tolbert noted that Athens resident Clint Murchison said his grandfather dated the hamburger to the 1880s with Fletcher "Old Dave" Davis.[21] A

photo of "Old Dave's Hamburger Stand" from 1904 was sent to Tolbert as evidence of the claim.[21]

Other hamburger-steak claims

Various non-specific claims of the invention relate to the term "hamburger steak" without mention of its being a sandwich. The first printed American menu which listed hamburger is said to be an 1834 menu from Delmonico's in New York.[29] However, the printer of the original menu was not in business in 1834.[26] In 1889, a menu from Walla Walla Union in Washington offered hamburger steak as a menu item.[12]

Between 1871 and 1884, "Hamburg Beefsteak" was on the "Breakfast and Supper Menu" of the Clipper Restaurant at 311/313 Pacific Street in San Fernando, California. It cost 10 cents—the same price as mutton chops, pig's feet in batter, and stewed veal. It was not, however, on the dinner menu. Only "Pig's Head", "Calf Tongue", and "Stewed Kidneys" were listed.[30] Another claim ties the hamburger to Summit County, New York, or Ohio. Summit County, Ohio, exists, but Summit County, New York, does not.[21]

Early major vendors

See also: History of White Castle and History of McDonald's

McDonald's Big Mac

1921: White Castle, Wichita, Kansas. Due to widely anti-German sentiment in the U.S. during World War I, an alternative name for hamburgers was Salisbury steak. Following the war, hamburgers became unpopular until the White Castle restaurant chain marketed and sold large numbers of small 65 mm (2+1/2 in) square hamburgers, known as sliders[citation needed]. They created five holes in each patty, which helped them cook evenly and eliminated the need to flip the burger. In 1995, White Castle began selling frozen hamburgers in convenience stores and vending machines.[31]

1923: Kewpee Hamburgers, or Kewpee Hotels, Flint, Michigan. Kewpee was the second hamburger chain and peaked at 400 locations before World War II. Many of these were licensed but not strictly franchised. Many closed during WWII. Between 1955 and 1967, another wave closed or caused changes in name. In 1967 the Kewpee licensor moved the company to a franchise system. Currently, only five locations exist.

1926: White Tower Hamburgers

1927: Little Tavern

1930s: White Castle (II; run by Henry Cassada)

1931: Krystal[32]

1936: Big Boy. In 1937, Bob Wian created the double-deck hamburger at his stand in Glendale, California. Big Boy would become the name of the hamburger, the mascot, and the restaurants. Big Boy expanded nationally through regional franchising and subfranchising. Primarily operating as drive-in restaurants in the 1950s, interior dining gradually replaced curbside service by the early 1970s. Many franchises have closed or operate independently, but at the remaining American restaurants, the Big Boy double-deck hamburger remains the signature item.

1940: McDonald's restaurant, San Bernardino, California, was opened by Richard and Maurice McDonald. Their introduction of the "Speedee Service System" in 1948 established the principles of the modern fast-food restaurant. The McDonald brothers began franchising in 1953. In 1961, Ray Kroc (the supplier of their multi-mixer milkshake machines) purchased the company from the brothers for \$2.7 million and a 1.9% royalty.[33]