

Make a depression in the center of the patty, it will puff slightly as it cooks and level out to form a flat top. Nicely grill marked and moist as could be, this well-done burger was finally well done.

WELL-DONE HAMBURGERS ON A CHARCOAL GRILL

SERVES 4

Adding bread and milk to the beef creates burgers that are juicy and tender even when well-done. (In fact, we recommend this method only for burgers that will be cooked to medium-well or well-done.) For cheeseburgers, follow the optional instructions below. (See our tastings of presliced cheddar cheese below)

- 1 large slice good-quality white sandwich bread, crust removed and discarded, bread chopped into 1/4-inch pieces (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 tablespoons whole milk
- 3/4 teaspoon table salt
- 3/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1 teaspoon)
- 2 teaspoons steak sauce, such as A-1
- 1 1/2 pounds 80 percent lean ground chuck
- Vegetable oil for cooking grate
- 6 ounces sliced cheese, optional (see note above)
- 4 rolls or buns
- 1. Using large chimney starter, ignite 6 quarts charcoal (about 100 briquettes) and burn until

covered with thin coating of light gray ash, about 20 minutes. Empty coals into grill; build modified two-level fire by arranging coals to cover half of grill. Position cooking grate over coals, cover grill, and heat grate for 5 minutes; scrape grate clean with grill brush. Grill is ready when coals are medium-hot (you can hold your hand 2 inches above grate for 3 to 4 seconds):

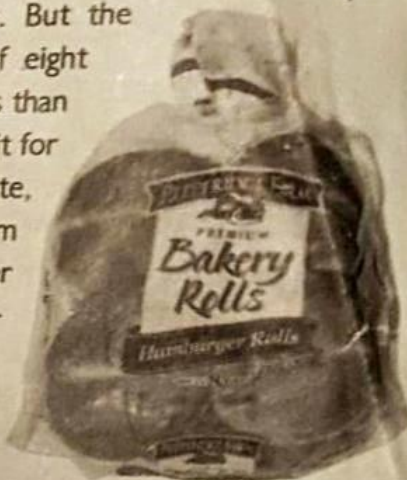
2. Meanwhile, mash bread and milk in large bowl with fork until homogeneous (you should have about 1/4 cup). Stir in salt, pepper, garlic, and steak sauce.

3. Break up beef into small pieces over bread mixture. Using fork or hands, lightly mix together until mixture forms cohesive mass. Divide meat into 4 equal portions. Gently toss one portion of meat back and forth between hands to form loose ball. Gently flatten into 3/4-inch-thick patty that measures about 4 1/2 inches in diameter. Press center of patty down with fingertips until it is about 1/2 inch thick, creating slight depression in each patty. Repeat with remaining portions of meat.

4. Lightly dip wad of paper towels in oil; holding wad with tongs, wipe cooking grate. Grill burgers on hot side of grill, uncovered, until well seared on first side, 2 to 4 minutes. Using wide metal spatula, flip burgers and continue grilling, about 3 minutes for medium-well or 4 minutes for well-done. (Add cheese, if using, about 2 minutes before reaching desired doneness, covering burgers with disposable aluminum pan to melt cheese.) While burgers grill, toast

Best Hamburger Buns

In a tasting of supermarket hamburger buns, we were surprised by the differences in flavor and texture. Sunbeam and Wonder were so airy that they all but deflated if grasped too indelicately, while heartier brands stood up well to wet condiments. But the dealbreaker was size: Of eight products, six measured less than 3 1/2 inches across—a tight fit for most patties. Our favorite, Pepperidge Farm Premium Bakery Rolls (not the smaller "Classic" variety), had a generous 4 1/2-inch diameter, hearty texture, "wheaty" taste, and the least amount of sugar in the lineup.—G.C.



buns on cooler side of grill. Serve on buns with desired toppings.

WELL-DONE HAMBURGERS ON A GAS GRILL

Turn all burners to high, close lid, and heat until very hot, about 15 minutes. Use grill brush to scrape cooking grate clean. Lightly dip wad of paper towels in oil; holding wad with tongs, wipe cooking grate. Leave primary burner on high, turn other burner(s) to low. Follow recipe for Well-Done Hamburgers on a Charcoal Grill from step 2, grilling patties with lid down.