



Tender, Juicy Grilled Burgers

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Great Grilled Burgers and Sweet Potato Fries

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Creating a juicy and loosely textured burger that could withstand the rigors of grilling called for a number of tactics. First, we ground our own meat in the food processor, which let us choose the cut (steak tips), grind (coarse), and consistency (loose) of the burger when we shaped it. Incorporating a little salt before shaping added richness, boosted juiciness, and seasoned the burgers throughout. Finally we shaped the burgers (with a dimple in their centers to prevent bulging) and froze them for 30 minutes, which held them together as they cooked and let them stay on the grill a few minutes longer for excellent char and perfect rosy centers.

Serves 4

This recipe requires freezing the meat twice, for a total of 65 to 80 minutes, before grilling. When stirring the salt and pepper into the ground meat and shaping the patties, take care not to overwork the meat or the burgers will become dense. Sirloin steak tips are also sold as flap meat. Serve the burgers with your favorite toppings or one of our grilled-vegetable toppings (see related content).

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2** pounds sirloin steak tips, trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 4** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1** (13 by 9-inch) disposable aluminum pan (if using charcoal)
- 4** hamburger buns

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place beef chunks and butter on large plate in single layer. Freeze until meat is very firm and starting to harden around edges but still pliable, about 35 minutes.
- 2.** Place one-quarter of meat and one-quarter of butter cubes in food processor and pulse until finely ground into pieces size of rice grains (about 1/32 inch), 15 to 20 pulses, stopping and redistributing meat around bowl as necessary to ensure beef is evenly ground. Transfer meat to baking sheet. Repeat grinding with remaining 3 batches of meat and butter. Spread mixture over sheet and inspect carefully, discarding any long strands of gristle or large chunks of hard meat, fat, or butter.
- 3.** Sprinkle 1 teaspoon pepper and 3/4 teaspoon salt over meat and gently toss with fork to combine. Divide meat into 4 balls. Toss each between hands until uniformly but lightly packed. Gently flatten into patties 3/4 inch thick and about 4 1/2 inches in diameter. Using thumb, make 1-inch-wide by 1/4-inch-deep depression in center of each patty. Transfer patties to platter and freeze for 30 to 45 minutes.
- 4A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:** Using skewer, poke 12 holes in bottom of disposable pan. Open bottom vent completely and place disposable pan in center of grill. Light large chimney starter filled two-thirds with charcoal briquettes (4 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour into disposable pan. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.

4B. FOR A GAS GRILL: Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave all burners on high.

5. Clean and oil cooking grate. Season 1 side of patties liberally with salt and pepper. Using spatula, flip patties and season other side. Grill patties (directly over coals if using charcoal), without moving them, until browned and meat easily releases from grill, 4 to 7 minutes. Flip burgers and continue to grill until browned on second side and meat registers 125 degrees for medium-rare or 130 degrees for medium, 4 to 7 minutes longer.

6. Transfer burgers to plate and let rest for 5 minutes. While burgers rest, lightly toast buns on grill, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer burgers to buns and serve.

TECHNIQUE

MAKE A BURGER THAT GOES SPLAT

Store-bought burger meat can't help but cook up dense and tough. It's ground very fine and then wrapped up tightly for retail—factors that cause too much of the sticky protein myosin to be released, literally gluing the meat together. By grinding meat ourselves, we can keep it coarse and pack it gently into patties that stay fall-apart tender.

A TOUGH SELL: This burger made with preground meat held together even when we dropped a 10-pound Dutch oven on it.



SMASHINGLY TENDER: Meat ground at home delivers a much more tender burger, one that splattered easily under the Dutch oven's weight.



TECHNIQUE

ADD SALT FOR JUICIER BURGERS

Mixing ground meat with too much salt will make burgers tough, but 3/4 teaspoon helps the meat retain its juices.