

10 Tips for Perfect Burgers

Attention to a few details will transform your burgers from good-enough to spectacular. Even if you decide not to use all ten of these tips, any one of them will up your burger performance, so employ as many as you like.

1. Start with the Right Meat

Photo © Molly Watson

For juicy burgers, get ground chuck with a fat content of at least 18%. Lean and extra-lean meats make tough, dry burgers. (This is true for [turkey burgers](#) or [lamb burgers](#), too—look for grinds with around 18% fat.)

The more freshly ground the meat is, the more tender and flavorful the burger: If your store has butchers, ask them to grind the meat fresh for you.

2. Don't Overwork the Meat

The more you handle the meat, the tougher your burger will be. In a large bowl, pull the meat apart into small chunks, add salt or other seasonings, and toss gently with fingers spread apart until loosely mixed.

3. Use Wet Hands to Form Burger Patties

A bit of dampness at the start will keep your hands from getting sticky. It also allows the meat to come together faster and prevents over-handling.

4. Make Burger Patties With a Dimple In the Center

Divide the meat into equal portions and form patties about 3/4-inch thick at the edges and 1/2-inch thick in the center. Since burgers shrink and pull in as they cook, this dimple will even out as the burgers cook, resulting in an even patty-shaped burger at the end.

5. Keep Burgers Cold Until They Hit the Grill

Unlike [other meats](#) that will cook up better if brought to room temperature before hitting the grill, you want those patties cold so they stay together *and* stay as juicy as possible. Put the patties in the fridge while the grill heats up. This helps more of the flavor-carrying fat stay in the meat.

6. Start With a Clean Cooking Grate

Bits of debris encourage sticking, as does an un-oiled surface and too low a temperature. You want your burgers to sizzle immediately, firm up quickly, and release from the grill.

7. Use a Hot Grill

Keep grill at a steady high heat (you can hold your hand 1 to 2 inches above grill level for 2 to 3 seconds). If using charcoal, you want ash-covered coals to produce even heat. With a gas grill, keep the lid down while cooking; with a charcoal grill, leave the lid off.

8. Flip Burgers Once and Only Once

Constant turning will toughen and dry out meat, and if you flip too soon, burgers will stick. Cook 2 minutes per side for rare, 3 for medium-rare, 4 for medium, and 5 for well-done.

9. Don't Press Burgers While Cooking

This is a common mistake in burger grilling. The juice that seeps out holds most of the flavor and moisture - let your burgers hold onto it!

10. Let Burgers Rest

Resting allows burgers, like all meat, to finish cooking and allows their juices, which have collected on the surface during grilling, to redistribute throughout the patty for maximum juiciness.

By Molly Watson, About.com Guide

I celebrated my birthday this year by buying an all terrain 4 wheeler. This is a picture of me playing with it in the back yard.

Life is Fleeting By. Enjoy it while you can!

