

Smash Burgers

This is the traditional, griddled hamburger of diners and takeaway spots, smashed thin and cooked crisp on its edges. It is best to cook in a heavy, cast-iron skillet slicked with oil or fat, and not on a grill. For meat, ask a butcher for coarse-ground chuck steak, with at least a 20 percent fat content, or grind your own. Keep it in the refrigerator until you are ready to cook, and try not to handle it with your fingers — use an ice-cream scoop or spoon instead. Plop down a few ounces in the pan, smash it with a spatula, salt it, let it go crisp and flip. Add cheese and get your bun toasted. The process moves quickly.

Ingredients:

½ teaspoon neutral oil, like canola, or a pat of unsalted butter
2 pounds ground chuck, at least 20 percent fat
Kosher salt and black pepper to taste

8 slices cheese (optional)

8 soft hamburger buns, lightly toasted

Lettuce leaves, sliced tomatoes and condiments, as desired
(Serving two hamburgers on a single bun is not an outrageous option.)

Directions:

Add oil or butter to a large cast-iron or stainless-steel skillet and place over medium heat. Gently divide ground beef into 8 small piles of around 4 ounces each, and even more gently gather them together into orbs that are about 2 inches in height. Do not form patties.

Increase heat under skillet to high. Put half the orbs into the skillet with plenty of distance between them and, using a stiff metal spatula, press down on each one to form a burger that is around 4 inches in diameter and about ½ inch thick. Season with salt and pepper.

Cook without moving until patties have achieved a deep, burnished crust, a little less than 2 minutes. Use the spatula to scrape free and carefully turn burgers over. If using cheese, lay slices on meat.

Continue to cook until meat is cooked through, approximately a minute or so longer. Remove burgers from skillet, place on buns and top as desired. Repeat process with remaining burgers. Serving two hamburgers on a single bun is not an outrageous option.

