

# JULY 4TH PERFECT BURGERS

Celebrate Independence Day with America's favorite food — juicy, delicious burgers on the grill. Add your own spices and sides to satisfy your backyard party-goers' appetites.

Get your 4th of July burger party started right by purchasing pre-formed patties or by following these four easy steps to creating your own patties:

- 1 **Lightly shape** ground beef into four 1/2 inch thick patties. The secret to **moist, flavorful burgers** is to mix lightly. Over mixing will result in a firm, compact texture after cooking.
- 2 **Don't press or pierce** patties during cooking — that causes a loss of flavorful juices, leaving your burgers dry.
- 3 Place patties in center of grid, over medium, ash-covered coals. **Grill**, uncovered, 11 to 13 minutes (over medium heat on preheated gas grill, covered, 7 to 8 minutes), turning occasionally, until instant-read thermometer inserted horizontally into center registers 160°F.
- 4 **Season** patties with **salt after** cooking. Salt added before cooking draws out moisture and inhibits browning.



## LEAN MEAN CHEESEBURGERS – 20 MINUTES

- 1 pound ground beef (95% lean)
- 2 tablespoons quick-cooking oats
- 1/2 teaspoon steak seasoning blend
- 4 seeded *or* whole wheat hamburger buns, split
- 4 slices lowfat cheese, such as Cheddar *or* American

**TOPPINGS:** Lettuce leaves, tomato slices (optional)

1. Place oats in foodsafe plastic bag. Seal bag securely, squeezing out excess air. Roll over bag with rolling pin to crush oats to a fine consistency.
2. Combine ground beef, oats and steak seasoning blend in large bowl, mixing lightly but thoroughly. Lightly shape into four 1/2" thick patties.
3. Place patties on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill according to step 3 above.
4. Line bottom of each bun with lettuce and tomato, if desired; top with burger and cheese slice. Close sandwiches.

**4 SERVINGS**



## GARLIC-HERB CHEESEBURGERS – 30 MINUTES

- 1 lb ground beef
- 4 slices red onion (1/2")
- 1 red bell pepper, quartered
- 1/2 cup garlic-herb cheese spread
- 4 crusty rolls, split, toasted

1. Lightly shape ground beef into four 1/2" thick patties.
2. Place patties in center of grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Place onion and bell pepper around patties. Grill according to step 3 above. Grill vegetables 13 to 16 minutes or until crisp-tender, turning occasionally. Cut pepper into strips.
3. Spread cheese on roll tops and bottoms. Serve burgers in rolls with onion and pepper.

**4 SERVINGS**

## STAR-SPANGLED CHEESEBURGERS – 30 MINUTES

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup honey mustard
- 8 slices American cheese
- 8 hamburger buns, split
- Romaine lettuce, tomato slices

1. Combine mayonnaise and mustard. Cut star shapes from cheese with cookie cutter.
2. Lightly shape ground beef into eight 1/2" thick patties. Place patties on grill over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill according to step 3 above. Season with pepper after turning. About 1 minute before burgers are done, top with cheese stars. Season with salt.
3. Serve in buns with sauce, lettuce and tomato.

**8 SERVINGS**

## FOOD SAFETY REMINDER

Cook ground beef burgers to 160°F. Using an instant-read thermometer inserted horizontally into the center is the most accurate way to determine doneness.



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# GROUND BEEF CONSUMER TIPS



## SMART SHOPPING

**HOW MUCH TO BUY?** One pound of ground beef will provide 12 ounces of cooked beef — four 3-ounce cooked servings or patties; about 2 cups cooked crumbles.

**COLOR:** Fresh ground beef goes through a number of color changes during its shelf life. These changes are normal and the ground beef remains perfectly wholesome and safe to eat if purchased by the “sell by” date on the label.

When exposed to oxygen, the color of beef will turn from dark red to a bright red. This explains why a package of ground beef may appear bright red on the surface, where it is exposed to oxygen through the permeable plastic wrap, while the interior remains purplish-red.

## STORAGE

- Ground beef is more perishable than steaks and roasts. This shorter shelf life is a result of the increased surface area that is created and exposed when beef is ground.
- Refrigerate ground beef in the coldest section of the refrigerator. Use it within 1 to 2 days.
- Freeze any ground beef that will not be used within 2 days. Label and date frozen ground beef and use it within 3 to 4 months.
- To freeze ground beef patties conveniently: Shape patties and place in a single layer on a tray lined with waxed paper. Freeze just until firm, then immediately wrap and freeze completely. Patties can be tightly wrapped individually or grouped together in freezer bags.

## FOOD SAFETY

- **DEFROST GROUND BEEF IN THE REFRIGERATOR**, not at room temperature. Allow 24 hours for 1 to 1-1/2-inch thick packages; 12 hours for patties. Cook as soon as possible after defrosting.
- **DO NOT EAT RAW OR RARE GROUND BEEF.** Because surface bacteria are transferred to the interior during grinding, it's risky to eat ground beef that has not been cooked to medium.
- **COOK GROUND BEEF WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.** Partial cooking can promote bacterial growth.
- **AVOID CROSS-CONTAMINATION** — between raw and cooked beef — during storage, preparation and serving. Wash hands, utensils, boards, counters and plates that have had contact with raw beef and juices, using hot soapy water.



## COOKING TIPS

- **HANDLE GROUND BEEF GENTLY.** The secret to moist flavorful burgers, meatloaves and meatballs is to mix lightly. Overmixing will result in a firm, compact texture after cooking.
- **DON'T PRESS OR PIERCE PATTIES DURING COOKING.** Flavorful juices can be lost, resulting in dry burgers.
- **BRUSH BROWN OR RED SAUCES ONTO GROUND BEEF AFTER COOKING**, rather than mixing it into raw beef. Ketchup, Worcestershire, soy and BBQ sauces can change the color of ground beef, making it difficult to judge doneness by appearance.
- **SEASON PATTIES AND CRUMBLES WITH SALT AFTER COOKING.** Salt draws out moisture and inhibits browning.
- **SAVE TIME WHEN COOKING MEATBALLS.** Bake in a 350°F oven, until no longer pink in the center and the juices show no pink color, instead of browning in a skillet.



## DETERMINING DONENESS

- **COOK GROUND BEEF TO MEDIUM (160°F) DONENESS**, until not pink in center and juices show no pink color. The most accurate way to determine doneness of patties and meatloaf is with an instant-read thermometer.
- Due to the natural nitrate content of certain ingredients, such as onions, celery and bell peppers, meatloaf may remain pink even when a 160°F internal temperature has been reached. Always check the internal temperature using a meat thermometer or instant-read thermometer, making certain it reaches 160°F.