

A burger and brew? Some ideas for you

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"It is the Americans who have managed to crown minced beef as hamburger, and to send it round the world so that even the fussy French have taken to le boeuf hache, le hambourgaire."

-- Julia Child

You needn't be a culinary expert to appreciate a good hamburger.

For many, a juicy burger -- coupled with a cold brew -- reigns supreme.

The Dispatch recently invited readers to brag about their favorite burger-and-beer haunts in the area.

The responses speak to a wide variety of tasty patties, whether prepared simply or loaded with toppings.

Who knows? Even Julia Child might have fancied some of the recommendations.

A sampling (in no particular order):

Mac's Cafe

693 N. High St., Short North

I prefer a burger with some size. I want to experience something significant when I take a bite. Plus, I like a rare piece of meat -- one with its natural juices still intact.

Sometimes I get cheese, bacon, barbecue sauce or even A1 steak sauce -- but usually I want my burger plain. What about the delightful goodness with a bunch of second-rate condiments?

That's why I like Mac's. It meets all of my requirements. A wide selection of beer, both foreign and domestic, is on hand. The dark, wood-grain decor, peppered with Scottish charm, and some steak fries as a side, and it can make you forget your girlfriend, a Buckeyes loss or the defeat of your favorite political candidate.

-- **Brian E. Higgins**, Columbus

The Gahanna Grill

82 Granville St, Gahanna

The Academy Burger -- topped with Swiss cheese, bacon and grilled onions -- is the best burger in town. It's huge and best paired with a vintage Miller High Life (light beer doesn't go well with a Gahanna Grill burger).

-- Dave Wilson, Pataskala

Thurman Cafe
183 Thurman Ave., German Village

The Thurman Cafe has the best burgers anywhere, not just in Columbus. Not only are they huge, they're also juiced with a great variety of toppings from which to choose.

My favorite is the Blue Cheese Burger with bacon. It's messy -- but so worth it. I just let the extra blue cheese sauce from the burger drip onto the chips.

There are also plenty of beers on tap as well as a full bar.

-- Jeff Modzelewski, Toledo

Shrunken Head
251 W. 5th Ave., Victorian Village

You have to give some props to the Shrunken Head.

It offers a couple of specialty burgers, but the attraction here is the meat. The patties are always moist, perfectly fired to order.

I'm partial to a standard cheeseburger topped with lettuce, tomato and onions with a little mustard. Beer? Stay local. Stay Local Brewing Co. has some of the best beers available, and the Shrunken Head keeps them on tap. I like the IPA.

-- Steve Croyle, Columbus

Michael O'Toole's
89 E. Nationwide Blvd., Arena District

The Coal Miners Cheesburger at Michael O'Toole's. It is delicious and filling, and you can't beat the secret bartenders.

I order the burger "as is," with toppings of applewood smoked bacon, onion rings, cheddar cheese and barbecue sauce. I like to wash it down with O'Toole's Amber Ale.

I enjoy the atmosphere and especially the staff at O'Toole's. They make my dining experience pleasurable and fun.

-- Jessie Eckert, Dublin

Max & Erma's
Easton Town Center

My husband and I have dined at Max & Erma's weekly (if not more often) for nearly four years. The burgers, soups, and bartenders can't be beat.

My favorite burger is one of my own creation -- with bacon, Swiss and provolone.

But the tortilla burger (served with a side of the fabulous tortilla soup for dipping) and the standard bacon-and-cheese are also really delicious.

The seasoned fries are great, too, and are especially good dipped in the house-made ranch dressing.

Paired with an ice-cold Blue Moon draft (or whatever crazy cocktail we come up with on any given night), it's a
wind down from the week.

-- Amanda A. Atkins, Gahanna

Whole Foods, 161 Diner
3670 W. Dublin-Granville Rd., Dublin

I recently discovered Whole Foods 161 Diner burger. The perfectly seasoned, perfectly cooked piece of chopped
fantastic. It propelled the 161 Diner to the top of my hamburger-joint list.

Albeit with a heavy heart, I usually remove one of the brioche-style buns and use my knife and fork. The burger
flavorful that I add nothing by way of sauce -- no mayo, no mustard, no ketchup. Lettuce, tomato and pickle are

In addition to Great Lakes on tap, you can choose any brew from their extensive selection. I like to pair the burger
Dortmunder's Gold. The not-too-sweet maltiness coupled with a not overly hopped bite, refreshes the palate and
for the next bite of the burger.

The friendly service by the wait staff and/or the short-order cook who often does double duty as the server, rounds out
satisfying experience.

-- Charles Roberts, Worthington

Hal and Al's
1297 Parsons Ave., Columbus

I highly recommend the vegan Luna Burger on a pretzel bun, with the toppings of your choice.

I prefer cheese, grilled onions and mushrooms, mayo, ketchup and pickle. I wash it down with Indigo Imp beer
in town that has this beer!) and add some sweet-potato fries -- and I am one happy woman.

-- Jill Davis, Columbus

Amano's
Worthington Mall, Worthington

The Blue Burger with bacon and blue cheese gets my vote. The burger, along with a Budweiser (the coldest I've
the Reds on TV, and I'm happy.

-- Mark Tate, Columbus

Tailgater's Sports Bar & Grill
4680 E. Main St., Whitehall

My favorite is the Weber Burger at Tailgater's. It's a half-pounder, and I like it with cheese, onion, lettuce and t

An ice-cold Coors Light goes very well with it.

-- Walter Bowles, Columbus