

These burgers are a smash

Give the grill a rest and sear burgers on a skillet

By **GRETCHEN MCKAY**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Grilling is a preferred cooking method for a lot of people in summer. Yet there are times when it's so hot and humid outside that the last place you want to be is standing over a hot grill, dripping sweat.

Those nights, when you're still craving a burger, why not make them in a skillet?

Smash burgers — the apt name for balls of hamburger meat that are smashed into thin patties after being placed on a flat top or hot pan — not only come together in a flash, but they just might also be the best tasting burgers. Searing the meat in a hot pan causes it to caramelize and create a nice crust. And because it cooks in its own fat very quickly, you don't have to worry about the burgers drying out, so long as you don't smash it again after flipping.

Traditional toppings call for pickles, shredded lettuce, diced onion and a good slather of salty-sweet special sauce. And don't forget slices of American cheese!

This recipe calls for

stacking two burgers between three buns, which makes it a handful, not to mention messy to eat. So be sure to have a stack of napkins.

DOUBLE-DECKER SMASH BURGERS WITH SECRET SAUCE

For sauce

- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

For burgers

- 1 pound ground beef, 70% lean
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 4 slices orange or white American cheese
- 4 hamburger bun bottoms
- 1/2 head iceberg lettuce, shredded
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/4 cup dill pickle chips, homemade or jarred



A double smash burger with cheese is messy to eat, but easy to make.

Gretchen McKay-Pittsburgh Post-Gazette/TNS

Prepare sauce: In small bowl, stir all the ingredients together. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Preheat oven to 250 degrees.

Prepare burgers: Divide ground beef into 8 2-ounce portions and gently form each into a large, loose ball. Do not form patties — you will be smashing the burgers in the pan.

Heat a cast-iron griddle or large stainless-steel skillet over medium-high until very hot, about 2 minutes (a drop of

water should sizzle in the pan), then lightly brush with vegetable oil or butter.

Place 4 meat balls on the hot griddle and smash flat with a spatula for several seconds to form 4-inch patties. No worries if they're not perfectly round, but they should be wide and flat; you want to sear the bottom of the patty into the heated cooking surface for around 10 seconds.

Season liberally with salt and

cook patties, without touching, until the outer edges are brown, about 2 minutes. Flip patties, season with more salt and cook another minute or so, until burgers are medium-rare. Remove to an oven-proof plate and place in oven to keep warm.

Repeat with remaining 4 meat balls, adding a slice of cheese to each after the burgers are flipped. Cook until cheese starts to melt and burgers are medium-rare, about 1 minute.

Assemble burgers: Spread a generous amount of sauce over 4 bun bottoms, then top with a burger from the oven, pickles and lettuce. Place bun bottom on top of each burger, and spread a little more sauce on top. Add a cheeseburger, along with more lettuce, chopped onion and pickle chips, plus a little more sauce if you like your burgers really messy.

Top each burger with a top bun, and serve immediately, with plenty of napkins.

Makes 4 burgers.
— Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

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