

What's Cooking at CAB

With Chef Michael Ollier

Having it your way

Nobody wants to be the proverbial “brick in the wall.” I think it’s safe to say that today’s culture is enamored with customization: Children make their own teddy bears and have dolls created in their likeness; students use online learning to customize their path to a degree; and adults spend more of their lives trying to make a name for themselves that stands out in every way possible. Celebrities have signature clothing lines, fragrances and jewelry brands of their own.

The food industry is no different, and you’ve probably noticed. Menus offer more “pick and pair” or “make your own ...” options than ever. Burgers are big these days, and everyone wants to make it their way.

You can do that at home, too. Focus on the flavors you enjoy most and customize your grind, seasonings and toppings. Then be a bit self-indulgent; name your signature burger after yourself!

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Blue Cheese & Onion Burger

Ingredients:

1½ lb. CAB® ground chuck
1 large onion, thinly sliced
1 Tbs. butter
¼ cup Lea & Perrins® Worcestershire Sauce
4 oz. blue cheese
romaine lettuce
4 hamburger buns
salt and pepper to taste



Instructions:

1. Sauté onions in butter until evenly browned. Stir in Worcestershire sauce. Set aside and keep warm.
2. Form ground chuck into four patties. Season burgers with salt and pepper, and grill. Just before your desired

doneness is reached, top with blue cheese. Grill until cheese melts.
3. Place lettuce on bun. Top with burger and onions.

Recipe provided by the CAB® brand.
Serves: 4

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Here are some tips on how to tweak that burger to exactly your liking.

Your signature grind

The restaurant world has been buzzing about signature burger grinds in recent years. My favorite is still the standard ground chuck, but chefs who want to create something unique are leaning toward a mix-and-match in their flavor profiles. The most popular grind addition is brisket, thanks to its unique and distinctive fat flavor profile. Some would mix it half and half with ground chuck.

Chefs who are already creating their own grinds have found ways to utilize the trim from beef items to make them one-of-a-kind. It takes math skills and a little intuition to get the lean-to-fat ratio just right when you're using tenderloin or short-rib trim to grind for burgers, for example, but it sure does make for an above-average burger. Ask your butcher or local locker plant about their grind combinations, and see if they're willing to make it your way next time.

Your signature seasoning

Restaurants are experimenting with some crazy, fresh new ideas to jazz up the classic burger with signature seasoning. These days,

you can create about any flavor profile you want in a burger. Try to think out of the box when developing your custom blend. This summer, I visited a chef who grinds dried Porcini mushrooms; adds pepper; and sprinkles the homemade, flavor-packed powder on his burgers before cooking.

A signature seasoning doesn't have to be concocted just from your spice cabinet. In the retail business, meat counter professionals are adding flair with custom ingredients mixed right into their premade patties. For example, you can intensify the flavor and savory juiciness of a good black-and-bleu burger by mixing the blue cheese and bacon crumbles into the raw ground beef. Chop and mix in any of your favorite ingredients — onion, jalapeño, shredded cheddar, a splash of barbecue sauce — and it's sure to pleasantly surprise your taste buds.

Your signature toppings

This is the area of the burger world most people spend the most time focusing on, and that's OK. But if you focus on the flavors you built into the burger in the previous two components, the toppings can be simplified. This is also a place to let fresh ingredients shine. Try avocado, crisp romaine lettuce or fresh-from-your-garden tomatoes.

Go ahead; use these early months of the grilling season to perfect your signature



burger grind, seasoning and toppings. When you find just the right combination, you know it won't be long until people start asking for it by name. To get you started, I'll leave you with one of my favorite burger recipes. Now fire up those grills, and make it special!

*Until next time,
— Chef Michael*

