

BREAKFAST BURGER WITH  
BARKER'S PROFESSIONAL  
BREWER'S BBQ SAUCE  
AND MAINLAND EGMONT  
CHEESE SLICE - COURTESY  
FONTERRA FOODSERVICES



# USE QUALITY CHEESE, SAUCES AND CONDIMENTS TO SET YOUR BURGERS APART FROM THE COMPETITION

Chef Liam McLaughlin of Global Hospitality Group argues that the rise of burgers is attributable to “a greater understanding of what goes into a burger, and building on that awareness in creating new variations.”

“If you think about it, a burger is really anything wedged between two pieces of carbohydrate, which means your options are endless,” he points out, citing the popularity of beef, lamb, pulled pork, chicken, fish, veggie, tofu and soy burgers on the menu.

“So burgers lend themselves to extensive adaptation across lots of different cuisine styles – and I think that’s why we’re still talking about them now, five or six years on from when their popularity started to jump up.”

Liam emphasises that driving this trend is a greater appreciation and demand for quality ingredients such as sauces and condiments which complement the core protein component.

“There are several things at work here,” Liam says. “The first is there’s a greater awareness of how a burger can and should be made – the basic elements that go into it. For example, you should always start with a nice, soft bun that has some sweetness to it, then a good core protein – it doesn’t necessarily have to be meat, but if you’re going back to basics, then the classic choice of beef is a great core ingredient to work with. Of course you need to ensure it’s properly cooked – sealed and caramelised, which adds a lot of flavour and texture. The fresher and juicier your core protein is, the better. Then there are the other ingredients and your use of

condiments and sauces.

“The sauce or condiment of your choice should provide a nice balanced flavour, and then your burger will often include cheese, and again this should be a good quality one.”

Liam makes the point that all these staple ingredients share a common element – a high concentration of umami, one of the five basic tastes. “Umami is the fifth taste that sits above sweet, sour, bitter and salty,” he explains. “It has a little of each of those, evenly matched, so simply adding umami into your dish can really enhance the flavour of the protein, which doesn’t have to be meat – it can be a fish pattie or a veggie pattie.”

“Cheese is very high in umami, meat is reasonably high in it, and tomato sauce is incredibly high in it,” Liam explains. “That natural fifth taste is something that all human palates crave at some point. So understanding how those ingredients work together to evoke that flavour profile in a burger, and then complementing that through your use of fresh salad vegies, nice pickled vegies and the sauce and condiments of your choice is what adds a very appetising richness to the finished product.”

Liam argues it’s the increasing trend towards developing burgers with this kind of flavour profile that is responsible for the growing public demand.

“From there, chefs have been able to develop lots of different variations – but this understanding of what makes a good burger in





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terms of flavour profile, across a whole range of different cuisine styles, is I think the stepping stone. So the dining public are getting a much higher quality offering today, as opposed to what the local burger takeaway joint or fish and chippie used to make.”

Of course when it comes to choosing ingredients, umami isn't the sole consideration. In the case of cheese, for example, you need to consider not only flavour, but also melting properties.

“You want to ensure that whichever cheese you choose, it will retain its stretch and texture without too much oiling off,” points out Alastair McCausland, Channel Marketing Manager for Fonterra Foodservice which has recently developed two cheese slices specifically for burgers under its Mainland Egmont and Anchor brands.

oil-off or greasiness,” Alastair explains.

There's also an increased use of flavours like garlic and chilli in burgers, and here Liam cites the use of products like the En Placé range of sauces and condiments from Riviana Foodservice.

“There aren't too many food manufacturers in Australia that have condiments which are built around these flavours, but the En Placé range is a good example. Once you have those as a base, you're a step ahead because you're enhancing something that most people don't even look at. En Placé has chilli and garlic pastes which are very balanced products – the garlic is not a sour paste, it's more similar to a cooked garlic, where you lose those bitter notes and strong odours. It actually starts to even out and become really pleasant. The En Placé Chilli is more of a chilli blend, on the milder



“Using the right cheese slice for the job can create a ‘wow factor’ that will grab customers’ attention by delivering superior visual and flavour impact,” Alastair emphasises.

He says Mainland Egmont Natural Slices have been developed to be the perfect addition to any burger because they deliver a full flavoured, natural cheddar taste with a superior melt similar to that of mozzarella. With a sweet nutty flavour, smooth texture and golden colour, they'll stretch and melt without the translucent oiling off that some other slices suffer from.

Fonterra has also introduced Anchor Burger Cheese Slices, which feature the vibrant orange colour that's a mainstay of American-style burgers. “Again these offer a savoury cheddar taste and will handle the heat, melting smoothly and evenly without unpleasant

side, which allows you to get a bit of flavour depth but without the heat.

If you're putting it into burgers then, unless you're advertising the product as a ‘Red Hot Volcano’ or similar name, your customers probably don't want it too hot. The fact is there is quite a strong flavour profile behind chilli, but people often serve it too hot for our palates so we taste the heat but not the flavour.”

Liam also suggests the use of condiments such as pestos – “you can





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## Anchor Burger Slice

Vibrant orange colour, every slice melts perfectly.

**Ideal usage:** Perfect in American style burgers.



## Mainland Tasty Slice

Firm aged cheddar, matured for a full bodied flavour.

**Ideal usage:** Versatile all-rounder, great in a classic Aussie burger.



## Mainland Egmont Slice

Smooth mild flavour with a superior melt.

**Ideal usage:** For the ultimate cheese melt with great flavour.



## Mainland Swiss Cheese Slice

Sweet nutty flavour with characteristic round holes.

**Ideal usage:** Where you want your cheese to be a standout feature.



## Mainland Light Tasty Slice

Reduced fat cheddar with full flavour.

**Ideal usage:** Lighter styles or more health-conscious options.



## Bega Tasty Slice

Full-flavoured cheddar with a medium to sharp taste.

**Ideal usage:** A great all-rounder and works well with pulled pork.



## A cheese for every burger.

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use a genovese, which is the traditional green pesto made with basil, or a Pesto Rosso which has a tomato base to it. This is a great choice for a twist on a traditional tomato style sauce. Pesto is a condiment which lends itself to white proteins like chicken, pork and fish and also complements vegetarian burgers very nicely as well.

“You could also try a product like En Placé Salsa Piccante – this is more of a fiery Italian style chilli sauce, which has a Mediterranean-inspired flavour profile made with peppers, chilli, eggplant, mushrooms, sundried tomato and artichokes. Given the extra flavour in that, it’s also a good choice for a vegetarian burger as it will deliver additional punch.

“In terms of presentation, what you should look for in a condiments is a fairly thick, saucy paste that will sit really well spread over your protein or tossed through your vegies,” Liam says. “If you can still see the bits of mushroom, tomato and eggplant and so on, then texturally it will be just right for the palate – without being too chunky.”

Liam’s argument regarding the rise of the burger is mirrored by the comments of Simon Paterson, the Managing Director of Andros Barker’s Australia, which produces a range of quality condiments and sauces under the Barker’s Professional brand.

“I think burgers have basically gone from greasy to healthy – they’ve shed their previous reputation as a heavy, cheap takeaway item,” Simon argues. “Today quality really matters and whereas in the past burgers undoubtedly held an appeal, they were a bit of a guilty pleasure because you might enjoy one and then say, ‘I wish I hadn’t eaten that’. But today the burger has evolved in terms of quality

ingredients and presentation to the point at which the dining consumer’s expectations have been reset.

“As is always the case with premiumisation, chefs and foodservice professionals have done a lot of work in coming up with innovative ingredients and presentation styles, and once the dining public recognise a quality product, then that changes the mindset of what it’s worth and what you’re up to charge. In the case of burgers, we’ve seen them go from a \$5 takeaway product to an \$8 experience and now anything up to \$20 and beyond depending on whether you’re serving it in a café, club, pub, steakhouse or restaurant.”



Of course if you are charging upwards of \$20 for a burger, then there’s a certain expectation in terms of ingredient quality and presentation. But even this pricepoint represents relative value for diners who are, for example, dining out at a gastro pub. If the menu mains are priced at \$25-\$30, then a \$20 burger is often preferred as a cheaper option.

As long as you follow through with ultra fresh ingredients and put sufficient thought into the construction, then there’s no reason you can’t position your burgers at these pricepoints.

“Given the fact that the overall consumer expectation has stepped up, the challenge for foodservice professionals is to be able to deliver this quality when often the staff have limited training and experience,” Simon says. Certainly some of the new burger bars are employing staff with plenty of youth and enthusiasm, but not necessarily with the skillsets needed to be able to produce a finished product which evokes the from-scratch quality consumers expect – hence brands like Barker’s Professional which are filling the gap with quality ingredients to meet this need.

“We’ve hit a real sweet spot in the market here,” Simon says. “We launched into Australia with the Barker’s brand in April this year, even though it’s 50 years old in New Zealand, and prior to launch we did a lot of research with Aussie pubs, clubs, venues and caterers. What we identified was a real need to assist foodservice operators in create a close as possible to scratch product which the venue can deliver consistently to the customer. It’s that authenticity in taste that they’re looking for and you can deliver by using a clever combination of ingredients which are flavoursome but not sickly sweet.”

