



# JOHN PORTER

THIS MONTH, JOHN PORTER DELVES INTO THE PROFITABLE CRUCIAL VITAL WORLD OF BURGERS. GET THEM WRONG AND CUSTOMERS WILL FLOCK TO YOUR COMPETITORS, BUT GET THEM RIGHT AND YOU WILL BE ASKING YOUR CUSTOMERS TO FORM AN ORDERLY QUEUE.

In most cases, once I've decided the broad thrust of the way my meal's headed, I'm happy to leave the detail to the chef. Having opted for, say, the pork belly or the sea bass, I'll then let the man at the sharp end of the kitchen decide what trimmings, sauces and side dishes will best accompany it.

However, when it comes to burgers, as far as I'm concerned, the deal's off. In part, that's because I've been let down too many times by pub menus. For some reason, chefs who describe in loving detail the various components of most dishes are often disappointingly vague about the way they assemble a burger. Simply describing it as a 'cheeseburger, served with salad' doesn't cut the mustard – or even the ketchup, relish or BBQ sauce.

Does it have a splurge of mayonnaise on the bottom half of the bun? If so, you can leave it off mine. Are the onions freshly sliced or caramelised? Fresh for me, please. Lettuce and gherkin? Lovely. Watery slice of tomato? I'm not so keen. Mature Cheddar or processed cheese slice? Cheddar. Well, you get the picture.

We all have our own preferences when it comes to what makes the perfect burger, something the growing number of upmarket burger operators are making the most of.

“WE ALL HAVE OUR OWN PREFERENCES WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT MAKES THE PERFECT BURGER”

This summer sees the arrival in London of two US operators, Five Guys and Shake Shack, who join home-grown brands such as Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Haché and Byron in offering tailor-made burgers.

Five Guys offers no fewer than fifteen different options for vegetable and sauce accompaniments to its burgers, which are freshly cooked to order. President Obama, when he stopped off at a Five Guys in Washington, chose lettuce, tomato, jalapeño peppers and mustard as his toppings.

With the barbecue season approaching, now's the time for pubs to be thinking about revamping their burger menu. Just a few ideas to help boost sales:

- Make it modular: offer a range of toppings, sauces and accompaniments, and let customers build their own.
- Fresh or frozen: if your burgers are home-made, shout about it. Shout loudly.
- Add some choice: offer chicken, lamb and veggie burgers as alternatives, all of which are available as bought-in options.

“ARE THE ONIONS FRESHLY SLICED OR CARAMELISED?”

- Sliding sales: sliders are versatile, smaller burgers which can be served as a bar snack, part of a sharing platter or as a main course selection, which gives customers a chance to try a wider range of flavours.
- Add a pint: above all, remember that burger and beer is a match made in heaven. A burger meal deal including a pint of cask ale is something a burger bar can't offer.

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Porter's Pages are brought to you in association with the lovely people at Staropramen.



A 5% Bohemian Pilsner with a full-bodied taste, rich floral hop aroma, notably soft and malty but with a delicate well-balanced flavour.

Brewed in Smichov, Prague since 1869