

NEW YORK POST

Burger wars!

With dozens of new burger joints in the city vying for your attention, it's an all-out battle of the buns. We rate the meaty contenders

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It's on. The ultimate battle royale with cheese. More than 50 new burger joints are set to open in the city this year, with new chains, like California's Fatburger and Umami Burger, storming the city and old favorites, like Burger Joint and Shake Shack, expanding their strongholds with new locations.

With all of these greasy new spots saturating the city, there are bound to be some ketchup-splattered casualties when the smoke clears. "So many of them are really good, but I'm not sure how many of these fresh beef and gourmet chains the market can handle," says George Motz, author of "Hamburger America" and the host of the new show "Burger Land" on the Travel Channel. "It's somewhat of a dangerous trend."

Some burger barons are already predicting doom for their competitors. "I think a lot of [competing chains] are going to go [belly-up]," says Adam Fleischman of Umami Burger, the California-based burger joint that is opening its first New York location on Sixth Avenue in the Village this spring. "There are too many competing in the same price point."

Which chain's burger is most worth your time, money and rising cholesterol levels? We taste-tested nine burgers and crowned a victor.

RATINGS KEY

4 BURGERS — Sheer burger bliss

3 BURGERS — Short of perfection, but well worth the calories

2 BURGERS — Will do in a pinch if you've got a jones

1 BURGER — Don't bother with this burger bomb!

VIEW THE GALLERY 

The Winner: Bareburger

Cow not your thing? This local chain — it started in Astoria in 2009 — offers exotic patties like elk, ostrich, wild boar and quinoa. There are currently 11 locations throughout the boroughs and Long Island, and there are plans for 11 more in the tri-state area by the end of the year. bareburger.com



Christian Johnston

Open wide: The Bareburger “Supreme” layers bacon, Colby cheese and onion rings.

THE CHEW: Despite all of those exotic options, the Beef Bareburger (\$8.45) shouldn’t be overlooked. The patty is thick, the organic meat exceptionally well-seasoned and the brioche bun an excellent vessel.

BOLDFACE BITERS: Steve Buscemi, Anderson Cooper, Stephen Baldwin, Liev Schreiber and Chelsea Clinton.

FINAL GRADE: 4 BURGERS

Two patties for the well-seasoned burger, one for the delicate brioche bun, another for the quasi-barnyard décor and friendly service.

All wired up: BurgerFi

This small, Florida-based chain touts its all-natural beef and recently opened on the Upper East Side (1571 Second Ave.). With its classy wood tables and free Wi-Fi, it's already a hit with local mommies and nannies.

Any time can be morning at BurgerFi with a Breakfast All Day burger — topped with egg, cheese, bacon and maple syrup.

THE CHEW: The patty might be a bit well-done for some, but it's seasoned well enough. Plus, BurgerFi offers interesting alternatives like the Breakfast All Day burger (\$6.97), topped with bacon, egg, cheese and maple syrup, and a Brisket burger made from 28-day dry-aged beef (\$9.97).

BOLDFACE BITERS: Kevin James, Sofia Vergara and LeBron James.

FINAL GRADE: 3 BURGERS

One patty for the quality burger, one for the family-friendly vibe and Wi-Fi, and one more for going all-natural.

The fading favorite: Shake Shack

Danny Meyer set a new standard for the fast-food burger when he opened his first burger shack in Madison Square Park in 2004. There are now nine New York area locations, with one near Barclays Center and another at LaGuardia Airport, opening later this year. shakeshack.com



Christian Johnston

Mayor Bloomberg has been spotted sneaking a fast-food meal at Shake Shack in Downtown Brooklyn.

THE CHEW: The city's reigning favorite could be losing its edge. On a recent visit, the bun on our hamburger (\$3.60) was unpleasantly squishy. The patty, while promising that it was all-natural Pat LaFrieda-blended Angus beef, was gray and greasy. And the line was, as always, interminable.

BOLDFACE BITERS: Mayor Bloomberg, Katie Holmes and Suri Cruise.

FINAL GRADE: 2 BURGERS

One patty for the burger, one for the shakes and a third for the tasty hot dogs and the 'shroom burger. Minus one patty for inconsistency and those always long lines.

The runner-up: Burger Joint

The burger speakeasy inside Le Parker Meridien hotel (119 W. 56th St.) has long been legendary, and now it's looking to conquer more territory. A new, stand-alone Burger Joint just opened in the West Village (33 W. Eighth St.).



Jonathan Baskin

There's a new downtown Burger Joint.

THE CHEW: The bun is straight from the supermarket, but the patty is freshly ground, thicker than you're apt to get anywhere except in an upscale restaurant and cooked to a just-right medium-rare. The menu offers few frills beyond your basic hamburger (\$7.58), cheeseburger (\$8.04) and fries (\$3.90) — but the new location does have a full bar.

BOLDFACE BITERS: Jerry Seinfeld, Sean “Diddy” Combs and Cameron Diaz.

THE FINAL GRADE: 3 1/2 BURGERS

Three patties for the freshly ground beef cooked to a perfect medium rare, plus a half for the ersatz divey décor.

Bargain-basement pricing: Checkers Drive-In

There are already 48 locations of these pseudo-1950s drive-ins in the New York area, and the engine is revving up. There are plans for 23 more locations in the city and on Long Island. checkers.com



Christian Johnston

Checkers puts two patties in its Big Buford cheeseburger.

THE CHEW: The All-American Hamburger (\$0.89) was dry and had an unpatriotic, synthetic taste.

BOLDFACE BITER: Rick Silva, who made a name for himself on “Undercover Boss,” is the CEO of the company!

FINAL GRADE: 1 BURGER

One patty for the low prices and décor, zero for the unpleasant taste.

The West Coast contender: Fatburger

The pioneering California company — its CEO claims it’s one of the first gourmet burger chains — has been around for more than 60 years, but it’s never taken off in the city. This could change. A Murray Hill location is set to open this month, and there are plans for nine additional NYC locations. fatburger.com



Popular California burger chain Fatburger is heading to NYC later this month with a new Murray Hill outpost, where it will flip patties like this monster 24-oz. XXXL Fatburger.

THE CHEW: The 2½-oz. “small burger” (\$5.89) we tried in Atlantic City (the nearest location until it comes to Murray Hill) was a little too greasy and fairly flavorless. Maybe we should have gone bigger: The chain features a 24-oz. XXXL Fatburger that packs in a day’s worth of calories.

BOLDFACE BITERS: Kanye West and Montel Williams love Fatburger so much, they’ve owned franchises, and Magic Johnson had a stake in the parent company.

FINAL GRADE: 2 BURGERS

One patty for chutzpah (this isn't a calorie counter's hangout) and one patty for leaving you satiated.

Homegrown upstart: Bill's Bar and Burger

When it opened in the Meatpacking District in 2009, this flashy-but-cheap-for-the-neighborhood burger spot became a quick hit, spawning additional locations in Rockefeller Center and Atlantic City, plus a soon-to-open spot on West Street in lower Manhattan. billsbarandburger.com



Christian Johnston

Bill's is bringing its sliders to a new location in lower Manhattan.

THE CHEW: The cottony bun on the Classic burger (\$8.25) isn't much to write home about, but the patty is well-seasoned, loosely packed and has a juice that deliciously dribbles down your fingers. And if you're in the mood to share, there are sliders, too (\$8.50).

BOLDFACE BITERS: Jimmy

Fallon and Whitney Port.

FINAL GRADE: 3 BURGERS

Three patties for the burgers and tasty shakes, plus another for the fast service. Minus one patty for the high prices — a burger, shake and fries will run you about \$25 with tip.

A new spinoff: Clarke's Standard

The group behind P.J. Clarke's is capitalizing on the popularity of the famous bar's burger with a new spinoff chain of fast-casual restaurants. There are two locations — in Midtown East (636 Lexington Ave.) and the Financial District (101 Maiden Lane) — and plans for more.



Christian Johnston

Clarke's Standard patties are served on an egg-bread bun.

THE CHEW: Well-seasoned and not overly salty, Clarke's regular burger (\$6.75) is a pretty tasty patty, but it's the St. Joseph's bun — a dense egg bread traditionally served on St. Joseph's Day — that's something special. Another bonus: You get to specify how well-done you want your burger.

BOLDFACE BITERS: Clarke's Standard is still getting its own following, but Brooke Shields and Johnny Depp are fans of the original P.J. Clarke's patty.

FINAL GRADE: 3 BURGERS

One patty for the meat, one for the roll and another for the charming, retro-1950s décor.

Quantity and quality: Five Guys

Over the past decade, this Washington, DC, fast-food chain, known for using fresh, never-frozen beef, has gone gangbusters. There are currently more than 20 locations around the city, and plans for 20 more.



Daniel Shapiro

A Five Guys employee makes a mean burger-to-order that never sits under a heat lamp.

THE CHEW: The guys' regular double-patty hamburger (\$6.39) is plenty big, not too salty, slightly sweet and far superior to your standard fast-food fare. Plus, there are plenty of free condiments — try getting jalapeño peppers or grilled mushrooms on your burger at McDonald's! fiveguys.com

BOLDFACE BITERS: President and First Lady Obama.

FINAL GRADE: 3 BURGERS

Four patties for the freshly made, unfrozen burgers, minus one for the functional, fluorescent-lit ambience.