

FOODPLUS



burgers & fries



FEBRUARY 2012

CANADIAN COMFORT

FoodPlus profiles three operators who sizzle with burgers and fries

By Adrian Bell



DELUX BURGER BISTRO

Like many chefs, Paul Shufelt, corporate chef of Delux Burger Bar in Edmonton, believes using quality ingredients makes a superb finished product. “We start with great ingredients — buying meat from [Alberta-based] Spirit View Ranch, who provide heritage Angus beef, hormone- and antibiotic-free. They’re very careful with the environment [in which] the animals are raised,” explains the chef. Customers are clearly happy with the results; sales are “between 400 and 500 burgers” on a Friday or Saturday. Ask 10 chefs what makes the best-tasting burger and you’ll get 10 different answers, but Shufelt’s recipe is simple. Finishing each burger (from \$8 to \$20) with chipotle mayo, is, he believes, what raises the Delux burger to gourmet status. “It gives it a little kick. We also like to use a little fresh thyme right in the burger. That would be something not everyone’s doing,” muses Shufelt. “We like to give it that extra flavour.”

THE WORKS GOURMET BURGER BISTRO



What’s a burger without peanut butter and K.D.? With more than 400 requests for franchises last year, the Ottawa-based Works Gourmet Burger Bistro is working hard, typically operating in 2,500-square-foot spaces, with 45 to 50 staff at each location. “On a typical Friday night, we’ll go through 400 burgers in one store, and we have 12 stores open right now,” says Andy O’Brien, president and CEO. “I’m not talking about the fries, the beers or the appetizers. Our grills are packed.” Boasting 420 burger options (from \$11 to \$14) with six patties, and a customization option with 69 toppings, the brand resonates with burger buyers. “We offer everything from peanut butter to Kraft dinner to salsa, to jalapeño peppers, to Montreal smoked meat and sauerkraut — anything you can think of — it’s on our burgers,” he says, adding the resto uses a specific brand of high-grade ground chuck, without spices, additives or fillers. And each patty is 100-per-cent Canadian fresh beef, slow cooked on an open flame.

ALLEN’S

Allen’s restaurant boasts what are “widely considered to be Toronto’s best hamburgers,” selling more than 600 lbs of house-made patties (from \$11 to \$15) each week. So, what’s the secret? “[It’s] the quality of the beef, the butchery, the handling and the cooking,” says John Maxwell, the hotspot’s proprietor who buys whole Angus steers, which are hormone- and antibiotic-free and fed grass, barley and hay. The formula is working, with several local media outlets often citing Allen’s hamburgers as the city’s best. “We’re selling more hamburgers than ever, and we’re in our 25th year,” says the proud owner. The menu offers choice toppings such as onions, mushrooms, peameal bacon and cheese. So, just how many hamburgers does Maxwell sell per week? “A steer a week, that’s 600 lbs of ground beef, divided into 5.5-ounce hamburgers.” That’s 1,746 burgers, but “please never call them burgers, they’re hamburgers,” adds the proprietor.

CHECKING YOUR LIST

When it comes to producing a great hamburger, it's important to have quality ingredients

By *Adrian Bell*

There are countless possibilities when it comes to creating and dressing burgers and fries; scroll down for some facts, cooking tips and varieties of four favourite ingredients.

AIOLI

"Let's see you make an aioli." It's a task many chefs ask stagiaires to perform when they meet. The fragrant sauce is comprised of puréed garlic, olive oil, egg and patience. Adventurous chefs like aioli for its versatility; you can switch up the flavour in many directions to complement burgers and fries. Fennel fronds, chopped basil and lemon make delicious aiolis. In the burger-and-fries sector, customers are requesting flavoured versions of aioli such as Dijon, chipotle, fresh herb and spiced sambal oelek (hot chillies).

Incidentally, a classic version, common to Catalonia, Spain is roasted-pear aioli.



SALT

What used to be a basic commodity, salt is now used by chefs who appreciate the subtleties gourmet salt lends to their creations. There are several options to choose from, including sea salt, an unrefined variety derived from the ocean or sea. The evaporative qualities of the sun and wind produce the salt naturally. Kala Namak, or Indian black salt, is a mineral variety with a pearly, pinkish-gray hue (not black at all really). It has a strong, sulphuric flavour and a full aroma. It's the sulfur notes that can impart an egg-like flavour. And, Kosher salt is a favourite, too. It was originally made to facilitate the ritual slaughter of meats. The granules were large and chunky to aid in drawing blood from the animal, while 'kosherizing' meat. These days, many chefs prefer kosher salt because of its flaky texture that melts easily during cooking.

RELISH

The bright green relish in the plastic container may evoke nostalgic feelings, but house-made restaurant relishes are being replaced by delectable alternatives. Whether you call them relishes, salsas, marmalades or slaws, creative toppings balance and add contrast to burgers. Take, for instance, a five-spice lamb patty with pickled cucumber relish. The cool, soothing taste of the green veggie plays off the spicy lamb. The same can be said of a Jamaican jerk burger with pineapple and banana salsa. When it comes to flavour combinations, heat loves sweet cool. Other treats to enjoy include mustard peach relish with chunks of stewed peach, mustard and onion; southwest relish with chopped tomatillos, bell peppers, garlic, pine nuts, lemon and sage; spicy red pepper relish with garlic, cider vinegar and jalapeños; jicama relish made from the root vegetable; and onion relish, low and slow cooked with caramelized sweet onions.



KETCHUP

Heinz sells 650-million bottles of ketchup around the world in more than 140 countries, with annual sales of more than \$1.5 billion. And, when it comes to single-serve packets, the Pittsburgh, Penn.-based company sells 11-billion pouches per year, globally. But, if the brand-name condiment isn't your style, house-made ketchup can be complemented by any number of tomato varieties that might add the perfect zip to any recipe. Unique tomatoes to consider include the Manitoba, an heirloom variety; Brandywine, considered by many professional growers to be the world's best-flavoured tomato; Ananas Noire or 'black pineapple,' is described as having a tie-dyed appearance on the inside; Sweet Million, a super-sweet cherry tomato that's ideal for salads; Sun Gold, a cherry tomato with a bright apricot colour; and the Momotaro, the most popular tomato in Japan, developed by the country's Takii Seed Company.



THE BURGER'S BEST FRIEND

Get the skinny on the latest innovations in french fries
By Adrian Bell

It's not just burgers that are being reinvented — the humble french fry is enjoying a metamorphosis, too. Whether it's curly, shoestring, freshly hand-cut or a loonie-shaped disc, fries are to burgers, as Brad is to Angelina. And some versions of the potato dish have garnered almost as much press.

In Canada, McCain Foods Limited, based in Florenceville-Bristol, N.B., operates potato-processing plants around the world, boasting production of more than one-million pounds of potato products per hour, making one-third of the frozen fries produced in the world. "One out of every three fries sold anywhere in the world is a McCain fry," explains Calla Farn, VP, Government/Public Relations and Corporate Affairs, McCain Foods, Canada.

According to NPD Crest Data, for the 12 months ending November 2011, nearly one-billion servings of fries were sold

in the foodservice market. "The value of fries based on distributor sales of frozen french fries — excluding fresh, premise-made fries — was valued at \$311 million dollars," adds Farn, referencing the NPD Potato Track record for list price, not retail price.

Scott McDevitte, senior foodservice advisor, at Milton, Ont.-based Gordon Food Service, quotes NPD data, too, saying "Q4/2011 data shows french fries represent the highest percentage of food items ordered at 13.8 per cent, which basically means every time someone orders a food item off a menu they pick fries 14 per cent of the time."

And, although the health-food halo is giving birth to new breeds of french fries, the classic potato sticks are constantly being improved on menus at QSR, fast-casual and fine-dining restaurants across the country. As an example, poutine



NYF
Braised Beef
Poutine



BK's new
thicker fries

has enjoyed resurgence in Canada, winning fans with new and improved offerings in all foodservice categories. These days, you can find the gravy-doused, cheese-curd fries almost everywhere, from the Oliver & Bonacini-operated Windermere Pub 'n' Patio in Windermere, Ont., to restos such as Smoke's Poutinerie in Toronto and even national menus at New York Fries and Burger King. In fact, BK recently changed its regular fry recipe in January, too. "We already have one of the most iconic burgers in the business, so our hope is to earn the same acclaim for our fries," says Lucy Todish, director of Marketing for Burger King Restaurants of Canada, Inc., while speaking about the new thicker, fluffier spuds.

When it comes to the healthier innovations in fries, sweet potatoes and yams have become commonplace, but below are

examples of several out-of-the-box options:

- **Avocado fries** – It may be poetic license calling them fries, but these avocado fingers are breaded, fried and served with a tangy, minty cilantro sauce.
- **Nori Fries** – According to Boston.com, Nicholas Dixon, executive chef at Harvard Gardens in Boston, has said, once his guests learn what nori is, they order it. So what's nori? Seaweed. In this case, sprinkles of nori apparently give a salty sweet flavour.
- **Mole fries** – Thick-cut "gaufrette" fries with a Mexican twist (mole poblano). They are waffle cut and seasoned with chili and cocoa powder.
- **Chickpea fries** – Inspired by the Mediterranean, the pulses are first made into a polenta, cut into batons, then fried. Served with Middle-Eastern spices and sweet yogurt dip.



RECIPES

Two Canadian chefs share their culinary creations

CRANBERRY RELISH (above)

*Recipe by Alistair Barnes
Executive chef of Canadian Rocky
Mountain Resorts, Calgary*

Ingredients:

2 cups	cranberries, dried
2 cups	cherries, dried
1/2 cup	sundried tomatoes
1/2 cup	red onion, diced
2 tbsp.	shallots, finely diced
1 cup	water
1/2 cup	port
1 1/3 cups	balsamic vinegar
1 1/3 cups	brown sugar
3/4 cups	red wine
1 tsp.	black pepper, freshly ground

Method:

Simmer ingredients over medium heat until liquid starts to thicken and coat fruit.

Store in refrigerator in sealed container and use as required.

ONION MARMALADE

*Recipe by Alistair Barnes
Executive chef of Canadian Rocky
Mountain Resorts, Calgary*

Ingredients:

2	white onions, peeled, finely sliced
2	red onions, peeled, finely sliced
1/4 cup	shallots, finely sliced
2 tbsp.	olive oil
1 tbsp.	fresh thyme, chopped
1 cup	brown sugar
1 cup	white wine
1/4 cup	balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup	marmalade jam
1 tsp.	black pepper, ground
To taste	salt

Method:

Simmer onions and shallots in olive oil until lightly brown.

Add remaining ingredients and continue cooking until nearly all liquid has evaporated.

O&B CANTEEN KETCHUP

*Recipe by Jason Bangerter
Executive chef at O&B Canteen, Toronto*

12	onions, diced
2	heads garlic, chopped
1	head celery, diced
250 g	olive oil
4	cinnamon sticks

8 tbsp.	allspice
150 g	tomato paste
4 tbsp.	black pepper
6 tbsp.	coriander, toasted
5 tbsp.	celery seed, toasted
10 kg	tomatoes, chopped
4 tbsp.	chili flakes, toasted
500 mL	white vinegar
500 mL	balsamic vinegar
1L	sugar
10	bay leaves
20 g	salt

Method:

Gently sweat onions, garlic and celery in olive oil until tender (for five to 10 minutes).

Finely grind spices together. Note: either grind cinnamon sticks with the spices or remember to remove the sticks once cooking is complete.

Add spices and cook for five minutes. Add tomato paste, cook for another five minutes.

Add remaining ingredients and bring to a bubbling simmer. Cook for one to 1.5 hours or until tomatoes are cooked out and ketchup has reduced to desired thickness. Using a blender, purée until smooth and pass through a fine sieve.

Yield: 1L

