

Bryan Schaaf:

We're back here on the Meat Speak Podcast. We are sitting in the Ohio City Galley at the corner of... What is this? West 25th and Detroit, right? Overlooking the Detroit Superior Bridge and beautiful downtown Cleveland, Ohio. With me here, it was a rare opportunity to have three of the biggest burger... Is aficionado or enthusiast a good way to describe this? I mean, do you like to be described as being enthusiastic about burgers or does that just sound a little strange?... Oh, there you go.

Alvin Cailan:

Enthusiast, I feel like I grew into that just recently, but I've always just been a burger lover.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Alvin Cailan:

I've never been that... Like, you talk to some chefs that are just like, "Oh, [inaudible 00:00:54] burger. I don't care about burgers." It's like, I've never really felt that way. I've always liked it. It's a thing, and I recognize it as a real dish, so yeah, burger lover is more accurate for me.

Bryan Schaaf:

Burger lover. I feel like that's a website somebody has to create.

Brett Sawyer:

I know what you mean.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's the newest dating website, right?

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:01:13] get a lot more restaurants you can go to, as well.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

So, sitting with me here, left to right as I'm looking at them, at least, Chef Alvin Cailan of The Burger Show fame, Eggsbut fame-

Alvin Cailan:

Hello.

Bryan Schaaf:

... the usual fame. Kind of you name it from Los Angeles and New York City. And to my right, two gentlemen whose names often come up in the confines of the podcast, either from doing very strange foods, but specifically in the context of this. It's never bad, by the way, it's always just, "Holy cow, I can't believe you guys have done an entire crispy egg or an entire beef crown roast last time I was there. We ate that whole-

Alvin Cailan:

Impressive.

Brett Sawyer:

We get away with things sometimes.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

Brett Sawyer:

We're lucky. Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, so with me here, from The Plum, from Good Company, from Closest to Your Pi Squared, and is it Grains and Greens?

Vince Thomascik:

Yes.

Bryan Schaaf:

In the Ohio City Galley, Brett Sawyer, Vince Thomascik.

Brett Sawyer:

Hey, how's it going?

Vince Thomascik:

How's it going?

Bryan Schaaf:

And actually, walking behind my shoulder, although I don't know if he's coming here, Dave Kocab, right? And everybody's showing up-

Brett Sawyer:

Stop and impress the [inaudible 00:02:19] a little bit.

Alvin Cailan:

Speaking of chefs who [inaudible 00:02:22] on burgers. Dave Kocab.

Brett Sawyer:

Don't we know it.

Bryan Schaaf:

So, guys, I wanted to get you together. Obviously, Alvin, with The Burger Show on First We Feast, man, the dude is just a glossary. Between Alvin and George Motes, our good friend, the filmmaker in New York City, who literally wrote books about hamburgers and roadside stands and things like that. He has such a burger knowledge, and of course, we went and feasted on your burger at Good company, the Good Boy, modeled after the Big Boy, right?

Alvin Cailan:

There's an amalgam of burgers in there, but the Big Boy being kind of the beginning of the double deck. Sorry.

Bryan Schaaf:

You're good.

Alvin Cailan:

The Big Boy being kind of at the beginning of the double deck burger. It's where we started, for sure. And currently, of all the fast food that we can get out here, it's definitely my favorite fast food burger, about right now. But of the three versions, I lean towards the Big Boy, the Ohio Big Boy, or the East Coast Big Boy, with their tartar sauce, special sauce, as opposed to the West Coast or the Michigan style ones. So, that's where I come from.

Brett Sawyer:

It's damn good.

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. Thanks.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah. [inaudible 00:03:37].

Bryan Schaaf:

What is it about it? And all three of you guys have a period in your culinary history where you've either done fine dining, or high execution dining, whether it was at a white tablecloth place or not, difficult dishes to... things that just anybody can't make. Everybody makes a burger, right? It's sort of like spaghetti. It's sort of like we just talked to a scrambled egg, right? Everybody makes those things. As a consequence, when you're in a place that's doing burgers, is it almost like really stepping into the firing line? It's like making pizza, right? Like you're doing here at Pi Squared. Everybody has an idea of what this is supposed to taste like. You're not telling them this is what it is. They're coming in with a preconceived notions. Is that more difficult to stomach, especially when you make something that you're so proud of, and then somebody, they take a bite, "Yeah, it's okay?"

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. I mean, I personally think so. I mean, you have to come at it from a completely different view. When you're making things like pork tartar and stuff that people have never really tried before, they don't have that benchmark.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah, you dictate that whole situation.

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. But when you're making a burger, something that somebody has been eating since they were six years old or whatever, whenever you had your first burger, you're competing with literally like decades of influence from other places and other things. I think we said, in the beginning, like a lot of people shoot to be the best at something, but I think that's nearly impossible in the burger game or pizza or anything. So, our goal isn't to be the best, but it's to be your favorite. We want to be the thing that you go, "All right. Maybe it's not the first time I had it, but it's so good I want to come back." Right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Vince Thomascik:

It's like that scene in Ratatouille where like the critic eats the Ratatouille dish, and he thinks about when he was a kid. It just smacks him in the face. That's what we've got to compete with every single day doing burgers because we have to make that dish resonate to that one person. And if you can, mission accomplished, and if not, then it's like maybe someone else will do it for you. But we tried.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

Vince Thomascik:

Yeah. That's it. It's like you love it or you hate it, but we definitely... I think when you come from like a chef background and you make a burger, it's definitely not just something simple. It's something that you compose.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Vince Thomascik:

When we were creating our burger, it was such a collaborative effort. We took stuff that, as individuals,, we loved and we tried them in different ways on a burger from like the flavoring of the pickles, how the bun was made. And I think that we kept it simple, and we didn't really do anything crazy. We're not serving truffle burgers or whatever. We had a mayo-based sauce, which was influenced by burgers we grew up loving. Or we have CAB patties on it. We got the bun [inaudible 00:06:41] to be where we want it as far as butter and milk ratio, so it had like a certain personality to it. And each individual person's like-

Brett Sawyer:

That pun is sick. That pun is so good.

Vince Thomascik:

And that's Nolan Tidwell, he was able to give him feedback on the bun, and he was able to just like adjust the recipe until like everything tasted right. And like Brett said, it's my favorite burger.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah, it's super good.

Vince Thomascik:

Yeah.

Alvin Cailan:

Thanks.

Brett Sawyer:

And the squishiness of the bun, nailed it. Like because when you get like a baker to make a bun, it's usually like a brioche base, almost like too... like it feels fancy. This one was like, there was a craftiness to it, but the squishiness kind of gave me that like the feel of when you first had like a burger made that was like maybe 99 cents.

Vince Thomascik:

Yeah. I think we had a lot of conversations about like while we were developing the burger in Wooster, we wanted that bun to kind of like wrap it, like not flake and break like too much fat in it. There was like, like you said, there's got to be like a sponginess where it almost just wraps the meat and doesn't fall apart.

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. Again, that's a big deal, and I feel like a lot of people want a lot of things in their burger, but if things are falling out of your burger, it is not a good burger.

Brett Sawyer:

Sandwich mechanics.

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. Sandwich mechanics. It's engineered.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

Alvin Cailan:

You know?

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

By that token, and I'm not a big believer in like... Well, what's a trend? Well, a trend is really whatever you're digging at that time. I don't really buy any of these food lists of, "Do this because everybody's doing this," but the idea of it does seem like there's such an influx of thinner patties of... Where, 10 years ago, you would see these giant, giant, I mean, half pound, three quarter pound burgers, where there wasn't really room... I mean, if there was room for anything else, you couldn't fit it all in a bun anyway. And I don't ever remember really getting super excited about that. I mean, is that still a thing that you see? I mean, is there a way to take that and...

Alvin Cailan:

I think that it was a trend for a while. When you look at places like Kuma's Corner in Chicago and the rise of the gourmet burger that were all like eight to 12 ounce patties, you ask for them well done, it's going to take 20 minutes for it to come to your table. But you also ask for it well done, your server's going to like scoff at you. I think that a lot of people enjoy their meat, especially on a burger, cooked mid well to well, and that trend didn't really allow that for people to say that. The thin patties of the Smashburger allow people to just enjoy the burger the way that they grew up enjoying it. Which, I mean, I don't know about you, but my grandpa and my dad never cooked burgers to mid rare on the grill, like that was a [inaudible 00:09:45] hockey puck. Sorry, my language. But that stuff was a hockey puck when that came off, and it was what I enjoyed.

Alvin Cailan:

But yeah, I mean, I think the trend was there for a little while. I mean, there were plenty other places when I lived in Chicago that had that thing. I think it has tapered off for many different reasons. But also with Smashburgers and thin patties, you don't have to worry about the cooks cooking it improperly.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah, it's easier to be more consistent with the Smash patties.

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. And you can fit more toppings, if that's what you want, but it also just harkens back to what we all grew up with. When you go get a fast food burger, it was always a thin patty, it was always American cheese and whatever. So, I that's my two cents.

Vince Thomascik:

I'll take it another level. When we worked in restaurants coming up, like what was there? It was kind of a thicker burger all the time. You're working in fine dining restaurants, people are trying to put more on a plate, and what do you cook and eat after service? Then what do you get sick of? So, that's kind of how it happened for me is like, I grew up eating all these eight ounce, nine ounce, whatever burgers with like... and I'm sick of it. It's like I'm rebelling against it now. I want Smash, crusty, greasy patties with a bunch of mayonnaise on it and that's it.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. There's something to be said for that. It's the Smashed Patty, but the actual chain, the Smashburger chain, I mean, Tom Ryan, who's the founder of that, who's actually the guy who found... He's a food scientist at his core. He's the guy who credited McGriddles. He invented McGriddles and stuffed crust pizza. Same guy who created Smashburger, right?

Alvin Cailan:

He put pineapples on pizza?

Bryan Schaaf:

But he was the first one who really went into the science of why the Smash and the crust. He would call it like your griddle candy, like that crusty like... That's what we really want. I mean, as much as I'm a meathead and I love beef, right? But man, as much as like I'm like, "Yeah it's all about the meat," dude, it's about that crust that you can get on it, right?

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah.

Brett Sawyer:

I was just going to add like, it was that, what you're talking about, is like the steak burger, where everybody wanted to, like in my head growing up, it started to trend that way when the economy was really good. Because it's like, people want to juxtaposition to cheap burgers. People want to juxtaposition to fast food burgers because like, "Oh, we have money now, so we can afford more, we can afford different, we want the steak, we want it cooked to temperature." You know what I mean? But now, you look at where society's going, we're much more comfortable with being ourselves, saying what we want, and what we all want, what we're comfortable with, we all want what we grew up with. We all want that first like sense memory, that taste memory, and we're not afraid to say that. We're at a certain point where it's like, "Oh, I don't want to say that..." I don't know if Culver's was around back then, "But I don't want to say I like Culver's because maybe that's not cool, and I need to say I like that steakhouse's downtown's burger," because that makes me, for whatever reason, seem like a higher standard. You know what I mean?

Brett Sawyer:

Where now it's like, "I don't care." You know what I mean? I'm going to cook what I want, I'm going to eat what I want, and it's out there for me. And on top of that, you have the option to have that same style but in quality now, where it's like I don't have to eat McDonald's burger at that whatever quality that is, because these guys are essentially doing the same thing but good bun, good cheese, good meat, good whatever. If you like the [inaudible 00:13:29] if you like to pickle, they're making the pickle. So, it's just elevating it but not taking it beyond and not making it be more pretentious than it has to be, in my head.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Well, and along those lines, Alvin, when you talk about those taste memories, man, one of the things that's not on your business card would probably should be, you are the international ambassador of In and Out, at least in my world. Man-

Alvin Cailan:

Oh, yeah. It's kind of crazy. It's actually grown [inaudible 00:13:55] when I go to In and Out, the people that work there, they recognize me because if you're working there, you're Googling it, you're YouTubing it, and I pop up, and when I go there, they're like-

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:14:05] put the chopped chilis-

Alvin Cailan:

On everything.

Brett Sawyer:

... and the cooked onions on it-

Alvin Cailan:

On everything.

Brett Sawyer:

... because all the workers were like, "Listen, we had it down, and then this guy would [inaudible 00:14:14].

Alvin Cailan:

I just [inaudible 00:14:14] for everyone. Sorry. I'm sorry.

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:14:17] bored. Oh, you got to get it the different way. And sure, that's available, but that was like few and far between. Now, probably 50/50.

Alvin Cailan:

Oh, yeah.

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:14:25] or repost it on Instagram all the time. Like, "Oh, I just ordered it this way." You've seen in the kitchen there, there's like 10 people-

Alvin Cailan:

It's stuffed.

Brett Sawyer:

... and very... That's how they're efficient-

Alvin Cailan:

And I throw a brick in that.

Brett Sawyer:

... and you hear about this guy, and they're like-

Alvin Cailan:

I threw a brick in that.

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:14:40] wheel. You know what I mean?

Alvin Cailan:

But, yeah, I just recently went to an In and Out by UCLA, and I walk up and the guy goes, "Holy [inaudible 00:14:50] man, you're Alvin Cailan." I'm like, "Yeah, yeah." And he's like, "Dude, thank you. I work here at In and Out, and we love you guys." And I was like, "This is cool." He's like, "Yeah, but like that whole chopped chili thing, everyone's ordering it." And I'm like, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Well, yeah man, I'm an advocate of In and Out. I will never say it's the best burger in the world, but it is that nostalgic feel to me. I always have to have this argument with people who, I mean, like every region I go to, it's like either Whataburger or Culver's or Burgerville or White Castle, and they compare it to In and Out, it's like, "Dude, we're all arguing about the same thing, which is, this is a burger of our youth. This is the burger that I took my first date on." You know what I mean? It's not about being the best burger. It's like what that burger meant to you. It's like that whole argument about like In and Out better than anyone else. It's like, it's not. It's not, and I'll be the first one to say-

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:15:50] your dad would always be the first to say that.

Alvin Cailan:

No, because I've come full circle. I've come full circle. I've had great burgers around this country, and yours being one of the top. This is definitely a top for this year. It's still new in the year, but this is definitely on top of the year. But dude, like I was saying-

Brett Sawyer:

You got to let us know come November.

Alvin Cailan:

... like last year... Yeah. Yeah, last year I had a burger in Jacksborough, Texas. It blew my mind. And then, it's like, now I for sure can say that In and Out is not the best burger I've ever had, but it took a lot of like self-reflecting and saying, "Hey, maybe I do like In and Out because this is like where I had my first kiss." You know what I mean? And we all have that feeling. And just to touch on like the big fat patties and like the steakhouse stuff, it's like, spoiler alert, the reason why that's on the menu is because it's free money. "We're taking trim from amazing steaks and we're putting it on the menu, and it costs us nothing and we're charging you 30 bucks for it." So, when you order that thick patty at a steak house, you might as well just get a steak. That's the truth.

Brett Sawyer:

A lot of times, it's market driven. A lot of times where, let's say, this, like you're not as familiar with Cleveland, right? But if a new restaurant opens, it's less now, but for a long time, if a restaurant opened, you'd have a burger on the menu. Enough people came in and had a problem with it for you to like not lose sleep over it but be annoyed and feel the urge or feel the push of, "Maybe we have to put the burger on the menu because people keep coming and asking."

David Kocab:

You to definitely dealt with it at one point-

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

David Kocab:

[inaudible 00:17:24] the first three years of Plum it was very much like, "Oh, why don't you guys just put a burger on the menu?" Because you can go across the street to B&G and get a really good burger whenever you want. It just wasn't what we were doing. And since then, we put a burger on for like two weeks. We called it our steakhouse burger, but it was two thin patties, but it had like blue cheese and a housemaid pretzel bun. We were just like having fun.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, it's fancy.

David Kocab:

Yeah, it was a fancy like Smashburger, essentially.

Bryan Schaaf:

Now, one of the things that you guys did do at The Plum, and again, going back to the idea of the burger of nostalgia, and it wasn't on the burger but you had a sort of an imitation Galley Boy sauce, right? From Swensons, right? I mean, which if you're from Northeast Ohio, Swensons_.

David Kocab:

Yeah, Swensons, that's my In and Out.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Say what you will, it is the gold standard of reminiscent burgers

Brett Sawyer:

Them brown sugar burgers, baby.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah. We did, yeah, we had catfish nuggets that we modeled after the Galley Boy.

David Kocab:

So good.

Brett Sawyer:

Which just meant we put brown sugar in the coating, and then we made like the Galley Boy sauce, which, to my knowledge, I might be wrong about this, is just tartar sauce mixed with barbecue sauce.

David Kocab:

Oh yeah!

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah. That's like [inaudible 00:18:37].

Bryan Schaaf:

It's very complex.

Brett Sawyer:

That's like the word on the street, but they don't ever give up the real... but it's supposedly they have tartar sauce on one half and barbecue sauce on the other, and that's the Galley Boy sauce.

Bryan Schaaf:

And that's it.

Brett Sawyer:

So, that was the dipping sauce for the catfish nuggets.

David Kocab:

Those nuggets were sweet.

Brett Sawyer:

Thanks.

David Kocab:

They took them off. And then they did, what'd you do? Like a year ago or a year and a half ago, you did your anniversary, and they were going to have the nuggets and I asked to get out of work early just so I could make it. I texted them so many times. I was like, "Dan, make sure you have an order of catfish nuggets for me." He's like, "I got you. I got you."

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah, dude. They'll come back eventually at one of our other-

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. That's right.

Brett Sawyer:

... one of our other things.

Bryan Schaaf:

So, what are just, as we're looking at time starting to wane on where we're headed with this, aside from the ones that we've already talked about, what are some of your favorite burgers that you guys have had around the country? Because I mean, I can rattle off, I mean, 20 burgers that I'd step over my own grandmother for. No offense. Sorry, grandma. I mean, they're delicious, right?

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

David Kocab:

Yeah. Do you want to start?

Brett Sawyer:

I will go first only because it's basic. Au Cheval burger at Au Cheval. I'll just go... Like everybody says it. I didn't believe it. I don't go out and order burgers that often, so it really has to be like a drive-in, counter service for me to probably get one because I don't like the steak burger like we've talked about. But I waited probably like 45 minutes to get a single bar seat at Au Cheval just so I could try it, and a lot of times, like we used to run in the Eggsclut, People get mad at us that there's an hour wait. Right? But we did not create the line. We didn't ask for the line. We're just putting up humble food. Even though I was building it up in my head that 45 minutes and the years before that I wanted to eat it, it did deliver. I wouldn't say it's mind blowing, but I said-

Alvin Cailan:

Did you [inaudible 00:20:28] an egg?

Brett Sawyer:

... this is... Bacon, not an egg. But I said, "This is what everybody's talking about. This is legit." And I had, what they opened like the Little Cheval whatever.

Alvin Cailan:

Small Chaval.

Brett Sawyer:

Small Chaval. That was fine. Maybe because the ambiance wasn't there, maybe because like the exclusivity that had previously been alive wasn't there, that it didn't taste same. But yeah, that Au Chaval burger was legit.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. And see, my favorite... Because every Au Cheval restaurant, or that's owned by Hogsalt, who owns Au Cheval, every restaurant regardless of [inaudible 00:20:59] has that burger on the menu. But my favorite one is the one, if you're in Chicago, go to the Small Cheval on Wells. It's the one with the Christmas lights over it. If you've seen The Chef's Table on Netflix with Grant Achatz, it's the opening scene. It's like he's there with his kids dining. That, to me, is the best rendition I've had of that Au Cheval burger. It's phenomenal.

David Kocab:

Oh, I was just going to say, I definitely, like when I lived in Chicago, when Au Cheval first opened and that burger was on the menu and like everybody was raving about it, I didn't quite get it because it was a burger. We went and the first time I had it, I was like, "Oh you can like do thin patties. That's okay." It was definitely the first time where I was like, "Oh, you can take that and make the fast food burger and fancify it a little." And it's dope. It was dope. It was definitely-

Brett Sawyer:

And had basic cheese and had basic bun and all that.

David Kocab:

Yeah, but it was like-

Brett Sawyer:

[inaudible 00:21:49] people that are doing it right.

David Kocab:

Right.

Brett Sawyer:

And the execution, but the devil's in the details.

David Kocab:

Yeah, exactly. It was just that they paid so close attention to the small details of something that was so simple that it made it extra special, so yeah.

Alvin Cailan:

Oh man.

Brett Sawyer:

Well, you've been everywhere to eat burgers.

Alvin Cailan:

Well, Au Cheval is good, but Chicago, I think, I like the Loyalist Burger better.

Brett Sawyer:

Oh, yeah. That is a good burger.

Alvin Cailan:

That one was damn good, but it's a little bit more fancy. I just recently went to Charlotte, North Carolina, and there's this place called ACE No. 3 and their burger was fantastic. It's a classic burger, Smash, they had the comeback sauce on there, but you could tell it's like in a neighborhood that's like [inaudible 00:22:38] and it's run by like the neighborhood pretty much. Like even when you're in the parking lot, they have a neighborhood guy going, "Hey come back up. Come over here." And the experience was awesome. So, like that was a really good burger that stood out for me last year.

Alvin Cailan:

And then, the other night you knocked me on my ass at The Good Company Burger. I mean, wow. It was really impressive to see like a burger that's made entirely in-house, and that's, to me, next level. Because getting a good bun is one of the hardest things in the world, man. Like the meat, the beef blend, all that stuff, it's like very important, but 50% of a good burger is the bun. And yeah, that's one that I'll take for awhile. So, ACE No. 3, if you're ever in Charlotte, try that. And obviously, Cleveland, you guys got the Good Company burger.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah.

Vince Thomascik:

I'd have to second The Loyalist. I had that when I was visiting Chicago. It was great. Definitely memorable. Lot of onions on it, which I love.

Alvin Cailan:

Onions. Triple onions.

Vince Thomascik:

It was so good.

Alvin Cailan:

Triple Onions.

Vince Thomascik:

The other memorable burger I've had in the last year was Tony Biggs. He made the giant Big Mac on Wooster when we were there. It was like as big as my face, probably bigger, and I got a big face.

Bryan Schaaf:

You know what I remember? Because it was, it was one of those gimmicky giant burgers, but it was good.

Vince Thomascik:

Yeah, there was various aged steaks around there, and I admittedly kept going for the Biggs burger.

David Kocab:

I will say, so when we opened Good Company, we ate a lot of burgers. We went to every fast food burger we could possibly go to. We went to a lot of mom and pop shops. And I will say, still to this day, so there's a place in Elyria, Ohio called Midway Oh boy. Growing up, they had a stand at our County Fair, where I'm from, and so even though Elyria is only 15 minutes away, we never really ate the Oh Boy until fair time. So, it was like a once a year thing, man, and you could smash these Oh Boys. And I mean, it's a single patty, it's like this... The Oh Boy sauce is like some crazy tangy mayonnaise-based like sauce. It's American cheese, there's white onion on it, and that's it. And pickles. That's the whole thing. It's dope. It's so good.

David Kocab:

So, I took these guys to the Midway Oh boy. We ate there. That's my benchmark growing up. And then, Galley Boy, forever, will be one of my favorites. I will have to say that, locally, the OG Tinman burger is up there with one of the best burgers I've had. But yeah, that Oh Boy is forever going to be in my heart as like the burger. If you guys ever want to go to Elyria, we'll go check it out. Nobody should go to Elyria but... But yeah, that's mine.

Brett Sawyer:

I was just asking Alvin on the side, when I lived out in LA with him, there was a place called The Oinkster. They do Burger Week, and every one of their burgers is like a rendition of another burger, whether regionally or specifically to a brand. And we never closed the truck early, like never did we close the truck early because we knew it was for exposure, we knew it was... It's an independent business, we need as much sales as we can get. The week of Burger Week, we closed that truck early, we needed to get there because there was a line, right? There was a line. People love this place, Oinkster, especially in Burger Week, and we wanted to collect the pins. They put a pin out for every burger. I think I still have a handful of those pins.

Alvin Cailan:

All seven. Seven days we went.

Brett Sawyer:

And I think we only missed like one day or something, but that was the only time we closed the truck early. It was during Burger Week. We needed to go get a burger every single day.

Bryan Schaaf:

Well, one last question before we wrap. As opposed to individual burgers, there's places that you can get regionally, nationwide fast... You got a nationwide or a regional fast food chain? I mean, obviously, we've... I mean the In and Out is the standard, right?

Alvin Cailan:

Yeah. I mean, for a chain burgers, I think In and Out's great, purely because it's like so family owned and it's not made of trash, and it's still four bucks. You know what I mean? So, that to me is like, it shows a little bit of the old school like... And then, like the newer stuff, obviously, like the Shake Shacks of the world where you're getting like a really [inaudible 00:27:25] blend of meat and all that stuff. But I still favor In and Out, and in that case, I favor In and Out over everything else.

Brett Sawyer:

One I don't hear enough people talk about, I mentioned earlier, is Culver's because they do though the Butter Burger.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm team Culver's all day long.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah, that's like the fat is what we're really going for. Right? Maybe fat content is important, but you want to go a little overblown because when you're [inaudible 00:27:55] these thin patties, that's what's cooking in, it's rendering out, it's cooking its own fat. When you cook it in any kind of like neutral oil or on the grill, like sure you're getting flavor from the char, from the grill or cooking on flat top with neutral oil. That's not adding any flavor. You're getting beef cooked in beef fat, and then not only on top of that, you're getting that caramelized butter that they work in there. And butter and a flat top is a magical thing. That's why Greasy Spoon Diners will always be around regardless, because all the food ends up tasting like that. So, that's like, I like Culver's, and they don't even have one within like 30 minutes of Cleveland. I think-

Bryan Schaaf:

I think Toledo is like the closest one.

David Kocab:

Culver's?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Brett Sawyer:

I was out-

David Kocab:

There's two. There's one in Avon Lake and an Avon [inaudible 00:28:36].

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, on the west side of Cleveland.

Brett Sawyer:

I think Avon maybe was the one... Kenny Scott and I, who was probably from of the podcast to a degree, [Larder 00:00:28:44], we were out foraging, and one day he told me, this was maybe like three years ago, he's like, "Oh, we got to go try this burger place." Me and Fred went. I was like, "Okay, whatever. I'll try it." And we walked in there, I'd never heard of it. He was like, "Yeah, it's out of Wisconsin," or something like that. And we went in there, and I just ordered a basic one because every time I go in to first have a burger from a burger place, I just get the basic one so I can judge everything else I have there against that. Right? That was a really good... That's just like the fat coated by mouth the way you want it to. And then, everything else like that, everything was soft, and it was like what was supposed to be textured was textured and what wasn't supposed to be textured, it was like soft and gooey. It was great.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Is there any-

Brett Sawyer:

I love everything about it.

Bryan Schaaf:

... is there anything more Midwestern than a butter burger? I mean, it's a burger just topped with butter.

Brett Sawyer:

And at the term, it got me. You know what I mean? If they wouldn't have said butter burger, I still would've think it would be good, but like the marketability behind that, like alliteration, I'm a sucker for alliteration. Butter burger just rolls off the tongue.

Bryan Schaaf:

It just makes you feel good all over.

Brett Sawyer:

I'm all for it. Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Like a butter burger.

Vince Thomascik:

Culver's is literally something that gets direct message to me once a week. Someone in the Midwest is upset with me eating somewhere that I've eaten, and they're like, "Dude, why are you wasting your time? Go to Culver's."

David Kocab:

They have the cheese curds there, too, so that's like the added...

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. It's Wisconsin, baby.

David Kocab:

... added bonus.

Alvin Cailan:

Definitely my favorite national chain would be... I'm a through and through a Big Boy. Like I said, when we opened, we were doing a lot of research on burgers, we were eating a lot of burgers, and like the way Big Boy started, with like in 1936 out in California as a little stand 37, they created the double deck with the center piece of bread. And I'm not a super huge fan of that, but with their buns, though, they're this bun at Big Boy just like, it like deflates in the top and the bottom perfectly. But like, the bread that touches the meat doesn't do anything but stay crispy, so it just wraps your burger in this like bread pocket and it's phenomenal.

Alvin Cailan:

The Ohio special sauce, which originally they were... The only thing that they had to have in the franchises was the Big Boy burger with special sauce, but the special sauce could be whatever you wanted. So, the West Coast had red relish, central Michigan area had like Thousand Island, and that was like what more people recognize the special sauce now. And then, in Ohio, we had tartar sauce, which was like something different, though. It's a little tangier. I buy squeeze bottles full of it from the Big Boy near our house and have it at home so I can put it on everything, really. But yeah, so Big Boy, that's my spot, dude. And the fact that they now offer it at all Big Boys, all three West Coast, like Michigan and Ohio versions of the Big Boy, that's pretty tight.

Bryan Schaaf:

There's, outside of where we're located in Wooster, Ohio, there's this... It's like a junk shop. The guy has out front... It's been there for 20 years. He has a Big Boy statue. I know what your Christmas present is going to be this year.

Alvin Cailan:

If you buy me a Big Boy statue, I'll hug you so much.

Bryan Schaaf:

We'll just come in, though, under cover of darkness. Don't worry.

Brett Sawyer:

We just show up at Good Company one day and there's this Big Boy statue out there.

Vince Thomascik:

I hope your wife doesn't listen to this podcast and finds out where that came from.

Brett Sawyer:

Yeah, she'll be coming after you.

Vince Thomascik:

I got to say I love the Big Boy. I also hate the the middle bread. So, my hack at McDonald's is a McDouble, no ketchup, no mustard, add big Mac sauce. It's on point. But also, go with somebody who hasn't been... I think I saw like an employee order once, and I was like, "That's brilliant." Rally's Checkers, Big Buford, I mean, that is a top burger.

Alvin Cailan:

That is a good one.

Vince Thomascik:

Yeah, man. Those onions are always crisp, the lettuce, it's the same every single time. And definitely got to give Rally's some credit there.

Alvin Cailan:

Right.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. There's a Rally's over on Carnegie. It's right between McDonald's and Burger King, and the line, it's like, even if you're in your car, it's like 25 minutes to get it. Which, by the time you get to the front window, it's like you're so annoyed, but then you eat it and it's like, "Okay."

Vince Thomascik:

It's so good.

Bryan Schaaf:

It was so worth it.

Vince Thomascik:

So good.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. Gentlemen, on that, we have Pizza from Pi Squared sitting in front of us, so we're going to put a wrap on this. Alvin Cailan, Dave Kocab, Brett Sawyer, Vince Thomascik, and off in the distance also devouring a delicious piece of brisket pie, Anthony [inaudible 00:33:31]. We appreciate you guys for joining us here on the Meat Speak Podcast, [inaudible 00:33:36] by the Certified Angus Beef. Thank y'all.