

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speaks podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Bryan Schaaf, meat scientist Diana Clark. Diana, how are you?

Diana Clark:

Doing pretty good today. Can't complain.

Bryan Schaaf:

Nice. Excellent. We are here via Zoom, and what a day it is. If you look into the dictionary, look up the word penultimate, which means it is the next to last episode of season two here on the podcast. And what an episode we have planned. I'm shaky, I'm giddy. I'm about to have my, what is it? Wayne Campbell meets Alice Cooper moment, and I'm just going to bow down and say, "We're not worthy." Because our guest today is an Emmy award-winning filmmaker, author, photographer, and has been dubbed the foremost authority on hamburgers by The New York Times. His 2004 film, Hamburger America, was not only nominated for a James Beard Award, but has since been recognized by the US National Archives as an integral piece of American food history. The film also led to the creation of the book, Hamburger America, which offers a state-by-state guide to burgers, and later, his first cookbook called The Great American Burger Book.

Bryan Schaaf:

Today you can find him hosting the Burger Scholar sessions on YouTube's First We Feast, or on the north side of the burger slide at his Brooklyn home. Please welcome to the podcast the man who has never steered me wrong when it comes to finding a great burger anywhere I'm traveling, the great George Motz.

George Motz:

That was an awesome intro.

Bryan Schaaf:

Thank you, sir. That's right. We write these thinking also double as an obituary as well, so you might want to hang onto it.

George Motz:

Thank you. Oh, thanks. I'm calling you.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. Man, we've got the guru of hamburgers on. And it's one of those things, it's like I can't believe we haven't had George on the podcast yet. I mean, we've talked-

Diana Clark:

I know. When you said that, Bryan, I honestly didn't believe you on that one. Where have we gone wrong in our lives right now?

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

George Motz:

I've been left out. That's okay. I appreciate that.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Even if you were live a couple of weeks ago, the great American steakhouse revival episode that we just launched talking about the comeback of the steakhouse, we still managed to squeeze in some burger chat about this. Burgers are ever present. But we wanted to go straight to the source before we put a lid on what we're doing here. Guys, let's talk about burgers. And as George said, there are multiple ways to, we'll say, skin a cow, as we go. But let's talk about, George, if you could give us a little bit of the 10,000 foot history of the hamburger, because we're entering June and July. Man, everybody is going to be eating burgers, right?

George Motz:

Well, how far should I go back? To the thirteenth century? Should I go back to the eighteenth?

Bryan Schaaf:

Take me back to Hamburg, Germany.

George Motz:

There you go. Actually a lot of people say, where does the hamburger come from? Not surprisingly, the American version of the hamburger comes from Hamburg, Germany. And that's the simple story is that as Germans were seeking passage to America in the 1850, '60s and '70s, they'd have to go out of the port of Hamburg, Germany. At the time, a very popular thing to eat was something called a Hamburg steak, which was literally just the chopped beef, cooked somehow, served on a plate and eaten with a knife and a fork with some potatoes and gravy, and that was one of the most inexpensive ways to get some protein while you were waiting for passage on a ship, which sometimes could take a month. They would get on the ship, and Germans would find themselves obviously in New York City, because that's where all the ships went. And they would get off the boat and they would find Lower Manhattan, they would find Hamburg steak. Previous Germans had established this German dish, which is now an ethnic food, in New York City, enjoyed by Germans and everyone in America at that point.

George Motz:

At some point, we don't know exactly when it happened ... Now, some people are starting to come up with some pretty definitive history at this point. But around the 1880s, middle of the 1880s, 1885-ish, the hamburger started to migrate across America in the plains states. Germans were now looking for more space, and they took with them the Hamburg steak, served on a plate with a knife and a fork. At some point, imagine that there are state fairs and parties, the hot dog had preceded it by, I think, a full decade. The hot dog was a portable food. And portable food was exactly what the Hamburg steak needed to be, and at some point we believe at many state fairs across the Midwest, the Hamburg steak jumped to a bun to make it portable.

Diana Clark:

That is pretty sweet.

George Motz:

And that's the brief version.

Bryan Schaaf:

So, in your historical ... Now of course, Louis' Lunch in Connecticut, right, credited with being the birthplace of the American hamburger. But it was actually happening at fairs, things like that, before they technically did it.

George Motz:

Right. I'm glad you brought that up. It's as if you just teed that right up there. Thank you.

Bryan Schaaf:

I do what I can.

George Motz:

Recently, I don't know if you ... The New York Post. Sorry, The Washington Post last week? Yeah, last week, actually definitively debunked the Louis' Lunch claim. Now, it's been being debunked for many decades. I mean, since I've been doing this I've always said that Louis' Lunch didn't really invent the hamburger. I mean, they didn't. There's a great story where somebody ran in to Louis' Lunch in the 1900s. They came 1900. There's even a government document. They have a whatever, some kind of special document, some big thing signed by somebody in the government saying, "These people invented the ..." They call it the Hamburg sandwich. Or, the Hamburg steak sandwich is actually what they call it.

George Motz:

I mean, I love these guys and we know it's been debunked. I could never prove it because I've always told the story that we don't know where it came from, but somewhere in the Midwest by many different state fair operators who were trying to find a portable food. Obviously, 1900, that doesn't really work out because these state fairs claims were coming from the 1880s, 1890s. Now, we just found out recently, very studious guy in Texas found in print an ad for a hamburger in a saloon in Texas in 1894, I believe it was.

Diana Clark:

No way.

George Motz:

In print.

Diana Clark:

That's pretty cool.

Bryan Schaaf:

Do we really want to give Texas more culinary credit?

Diana Clark:

No.

Bryan Schaaf:

I mean, they've taken barbecue. Like, guys.

George Motz:

We don't know. We don't know, exactly, because there's this person, this same, studious person in Texas also then found another claim in San Francisco. The reporter from The Washington Post found another claim in Delaware. It's all over the place. It's over. It's game over. I mean, we have so much in print now. We're about to do a Burger Scholar Sessions episode about this because I mean, can you believe there's breaking news in the world of hamburger history?

Bryan Schaaf:

It's amazing. I mean, this is like Capone's vault, right?

Diana Clark:

Seriously.

Bryan Schaaf:

Who knows what's out there? All right, let's talk about it. We have talked at length over the two seasons of this podcast about the burger makeup. The idea of, of course, 80/20 ground chuck is sort of your universal gold standard. You have all these unique blends, chuck, brisket, short rib. Our pals up in Cleveland at Top Company do a top sirloin beef navel blend that is delightful. So good.

Diana Clark:

Delicious.

Bryan Schaaf:

We've talked at length, so I don't to rehash that side of it. But let's talk about the actual cooking process. We already went to Louis' Lunch, which to me is one of the most unique things. And it's a vertical broiler system that they use. Can you tell us about that?

George Motz:

Well, I don't really know why this thing came about but they have stoves in Louis' Lunch that are upright broilers. I know there was like a salamander, cooks in the top, [inaudible 00:08:16] bottom. It's like a broiler, but it's a two-sided broiler that cooks up and down, so the heat goes ... It's very strange. I don't know why. These broilers have a date on the side. It's actually printed on the side. It says 1895, I believe. 1895. They still use them. They're still in play today. If they break, they fix them themselves. It's amazing. It's ridiculous, in a way, because it seems like a very inefficient way to cook a burger. You also can't put cheese on them because the burger goes into almost like one of those fish grates. You know when you put fish things, you use to put on an outdoor grill?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

George Motz:

It goes in sideways, like this. Doesn't make any sense. You can't put cheese on that, because otherwise cheese would just be all over the damn thing.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Where does the grease go? I mean, where do the drippings go on this?

George Motz:

Down. Down, somewhere. The thing is, they taste great. They taste great. And what Louis' Lunch does, there's not many people do, is they use very, very lean beef. I think they're 90/10 sirloin.

Bryan Schaaf:

Really?

George Motz:

Yeah. But because of the way they cook it, I guess the salamander cooking-

Bryan Schaaf:

That's interesting. All right, let's talk about something a little more mainstream. And it's, I mean, my favorite. I am actually made up of 65% smash burger right now. I guess most people are, like, 70% water. I am at least 65% smash burger.

George Motz:

Maybe up at 95% at this point, though.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. I mean, if we can ... And Diana, gives us a little bit of the idea of what happens when you put it on a flattop, especially when it's a very old, well seasoned flattop. There's something magic that happens there between all that age on the flattop and the meat. What's going on there that is giving you that crust?

Diana Clark:

And that's, to me, the beauty of the smash burger, is you get that Maillard reaction occurring across all surface of the meat. Before, I mean you take a patty that's got a little bit of dimension and everything like that, you grill it or whatever, but everything in the middle is not getting touched. Now, this smash burger, you just press it down and every, single surface area gets that beautiful browning effect on there that basically is like the same thing as caramelizing but with just proteins. You don't have that sugar component in there. But it creates that crust on there, and you get it on both sides of it too.

Diana Clark:

I mean I honestly didn't really think much about the smash burger until I sat there and started ... The science behind it. Like, man, this has to be a good burger. It has to be. There's no doubt about it. And

especially when you add those really thin, shaved onions on top, oh my gosh. There's nothing that can compare to that taste. And so then you add on, plus all the grease and everything if it's on that actual flattop that's been sitting there for years just collecting. I mean, they'll clean it every now and again. But it just has all of that extra fat too that gets smashed, that actually is able to hold in as well. So now, you're going to scoop that patty up and put on the burger and it's going to retain a lot of that juiciness.

Diana Clark:

That's why that really amazes me with that Louis' Lunch. That's probably why they're using the 90/10, because I mean if you're grilling ... And this is shown in science. If you have an 80/20, or if you have an 85/15, when you start to lose a certain amount of fat they kind of go back to the same fat ratio at the end as the fat drips out. Even if I start with a 90/10, it might hold around there. It might lose a little bit of fat. But if I had an 80/20, it's probably going to lose more of that fat in the cooking process and get closer to the 90/10. So it's like, why am I going to pay for more fat when we're just going to lose the fat anyways?

Diana Clark:

But in a flattop cooking situation, or if you're cooking in a pan or something like that, you get to actually retain a lot of that fat. Essentially, you're just basting the meat in its own fat, which is pretty incredible. And then you add some cheese to the top and yeah, you got yourselves a good lunch.

George Motz:

I told The New York Times years ago ... I was talking to a reporter at The New York Times, Sam Sifton. And I blew his mind when I said, "Think of it as a burger confit," which is really what it is.

Diana Clark:

Yes, exactly. Yeah, that's a great point.

George Motz:

Because when you cook a burger over a flame ... This is something I learned from your predecessor. I mean, Phil is a great guy. And Phil actually opened my brain to the science of the burger. I never even thought about it until he told me about it, from the film that we made together. Dr. Phil. The other Dr. Phil. He taught me something very cool. He said that, think about it. When you cook a burger on a flame, the fat renders, and fat can only go down. Well, it either stays in if you're not pressing it, but some of it is going to escape and go down. Especially all those surface fats, they're going to render and drip. The drips then hit the flame, and the flames are so hot that, exactly, I saw you do this. Like, an explosion of fat. And the beef then becomes an airborne carbonic compound, and settles back onto the burger which we all know is what creates that flavor of the backyard burger. It's not so much the direct flame but the exploding fat that then falls back down on top of the burger and envelops it in this wonderful backyard burger flavor. Who's hungry?

Diana Clark:

Yeah, I know. Seriously.

Bryan Schaaf:

Always. All right, you know what? I do want to come back to the smash, but let's talk about that. When you're cooking burgers over grates, the idea of the press. You don't really want to do a smash burger over grates.

George Motz:

Well, because you know what will happen physically.

Diana Clark:

Yeah, that's true.

George Motz:

You're going to end up with this ... I don't know what you're doing. But you're basically making taco meat in the fire. You can't press. Hang on, you can actually put a flattop, put a skillet or a flattop on a flame grill, and then you can do both.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. That's how I do all my outdoor burgers. I don't mess around with the grates at all. But it is that idea of ... That just blew my mind a little bit, because I hadn't heard that. And I've watched the video 100 times. It's funny, I did not pick up on that video. The video we are referencing is if you go to YouTube and just search the science ... What is it? The Science Behind the Hamburger, Science of the Hamburger.

George Motz:

Science of the Burger.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, yeah. And it's fantastic. I'm such a fan. Let's go back to this idea of cast iron, of the seasoned griddle that you're cooking on. But if you look at Hamburger America, the film, the book, a good number of these old-school diners that have been around for almost a century or beyond, that's the method they employ. Can you talk about that a little bit? I mean, there is something there that ... And I always look at it, I work for Certified Angus Beef, but it's one of those things I almost feel like I would never recommend they change what they're doing because obviously it's worked for this long. If you're not using Certified Angus Beef, it's cool. I'm still going to come eat. They have some magic there that is just inexplicable.

George Motz:

Well, I mean keep in mind that at the beginning of the hamburger, the dawn of the hamburger in America, there were no ... They weren't cooking on open fire. They were actually cooking on a flattop. But they weren't even cooking on a flattop. The flattop hadn't even been invented yet. The flattop is an invention that was basically by people who were cooking in cast iron skillets. That's how it began. In the beginning, it was cast iron skillets, just some kind of enclosed pan. And they started to realize that all the fat was collecting in there and they had to get rid of it somehow. Some places actually embraced the idea of almost deep frying a burger. They would get a lunch rush, they would smash a patty, make a flat ball and just stick it right into the grease and it would cook that way. And they realized people actually kind of liked the flavor.

George Motz:

And then something even weirder happened. A bunch of places started to ... I guess during the hard times, maybe in the '20s or '30s, they would take yesterday's bread rolls, they'd crumble them up, dry, now breadcrumbs, they'd mix it into the beef and the put that into their deep-fry oil, and created this experience that was like ... I mean, the flavor of the rendered beef fat collecting in those breadcrumbs is unbelievable. And there's still a few places in America that do it that way. In fact, there's one in Ohio, by the way, just so you know.

Bryan Schaaf:

Who's that? Really?

George Motz:

Miamisburg, Ohio. A place called the Hamburger Wagon. And they still do that. They still cook ... They bread some meat, and they put it into a huge, cast iron skillet on a horse-drawn carriage. It's very bizarre. The whole thing is ... Do you need to go?

Bryan Schaaf:

That's all right. That's amazing.

Diana Clark:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

So, you're putting bread in there. You're almost putting a sponge inside the meat, too. I mean, I would imagine it will hold onto that ... I mean, Diana, would you agree? I mean-

Diana Clark:

Oh, yeah. The seasoning and everything. It's funny, I went to Australia a few years back. And we were just kind of traveling around. They have a burger patty but it's got everything mixed in it. And they said, I mean if you think about how Australia became ... I mean, it's a lot of just poor people who have been in prison and everything like that, just backgrounds. And so they said that that was their normal thing of just it was throwing everything that they had left over in from the day before into ground beef and making a patty of it. But when I ate it, I mean this is phenomenal because it has all these other flavors in there too that you really don't expect from just the typical patty. And this gives you the better texture and everything. Man, this is a really great bad fortune, I guess, that happened, but it's just so much great flavors. I'm like, why don't we see more of that here? That's really cool, to see that you do actually have a lot of that going on within the United States. It's just kind of unknown, I guess.

George Motz:

Well, this goes back 100 years. The Hamburger Cart is, I think, this year or last year was 100 years old.

Diana Clark:

That's awesome.

George Motz:

This goes back to the beginning. This is the beginning. Talking about the dawn of the hamburger, people were cooking in cast iron skillets and some people just never got away from that. Eventually, the flattop was invented which was very important because the flattop ... We call it a flattop. It's a top that has ... What makes it so unique as a flattop is that it has something called a grease catch. And basically, it's a channel where the grease can go out, in a way. And that's so you can keep cooking and cooking and cooking, and the grease goes away, you don't have to worry about starting grease fires. You imagine that it only took a few grease fires-

Diana Clark:

To figure that one out, yeah.

George Motz:

To figure that one out. Like, okay. Let's see. If I get this rendered beef fat really hot, I've got flames underneath, at some point it's just going to burst into flames. Keep in mind also that in the beginning, when the hamburger was not seen as ... It wasn't anything high end. It was not served in fancy restaurants at all. It was served usually from cloth-made tents, and haphazardly built buildings that would go up in flames like that. I mean, they basically were probably the most flammable structures you could think of for a cast iron skillet full of hot grease. It's ridiculous.

Diana Clark:

Maybe that's what started the Chicago Fire. They always talk about the child knocking over the ... You know? Have you thought about that one? I'm just saying. I mean, World's Fair and everything.

Bryan Schaaf:

Could have been burgers. Could have been a burger.

George Motz:

Cast iron becomes very important, obviously, because this is where everybody was cooking in some kind of a tank or cast iron pan. And the funny thing was that you think about a flame, flame grilling didn't really come around til much later. People think of that as that's the way you should cook a burger. It's the hardest way to cook a burger. Most difficult way.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's interesting.

Diana Clark:

From a shape standpoint, I completely agree with that. Yeah, it is. And then just degree of doneness and all that you have to worry about. You don't even have to worry about that with a smash burger, it's done. Like, it's definitely cooked.

George Motz:

If you have your barbecue with your friends and you want to have a good time, you want to drink a little bit, sure. Why not? But you're never going to create magic for your entire family or all your friends. If

you've got 10 friends or 40 friends, you want to screw it up, cook on a flame grill with a couple of drinks in your hand. Good luck. You are like a recipe for disaster. You're talking to your friends, "You want a beer?" Yeah, I'll take another beer. "How's the fire going?" Oh, I think I burned them.

George Motz:

The advice I always give to people is that number one, put the beer down. You have 15 minutes to make magic. Why wouldn't you want to focus? Number two, cook on a flattop. If you have a flattop ... I swear, you have a flattop outside and put the beer down for 15 minutes, people are going to walk away talking about that for days and weeks and months. Like, "Wow, how did he do that? Burgers were so good."

Bryan Schaaf:

You are famous for obviously you didn't create it, but the Oklahoma Smash. Taking thinly sliced onions, and you smash the burger into the onions on the flattop, right?

George Motz:

No.

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, it's the other way?

George Motz:

I smash the onions into the burger.

Bryan Schaaf:

And then you flip it?

George Motz:

Yeah. Yeah. It's amazing. Every, single day, someone sends me some post like, "This guy's doing it all wrong. You do it the right way." I just do it what they do in Oklahoma. I'm not trying to reinvent anything over here. Literally my job as a hamburger historian is to make sure that everyone else is getting it right. And I get it right too. I mean, we go by details. If a place serves it in a certain type of yellow paper or whatever, I'm serving it in yellow paper. If they smashed onions into the patty instead of the patty onto the onions, that's what I'm doing. Because people have established there's a way to make a burger. And they obviously have got a century of, a history behind it, and they still have customers coming in the door every day, you need to follow what they're doing.

Bryan Schaaf:

Well said. And it's historical accuracy. But what you're also doing, I'm assuming, because I don't love onions. But I want that onion in my smash burger. Because I assume you're adding natural sugars, right? So that will caramelize and just add another layer of flavor on the outside, right?

George Motz:

Well, it's any kind of white or yellow onion will work except the best, the very, very best, is going to be a thinner than paper, sliced sweet onion. Vidalia, if you're on the West Coast, Walla Walla. If you're in

Texas, what do they call it? Texas Sweet. Is it Texas Sweet? Something like that. It has to be an onion you can almost eat like an apple. Which, I would not recommend that. Please don't do that. And then send me a DM saying, "I have a stomach ache. I ate the onion like you said." That's not what my fans sound like, by the way. That was just a ...

George Motz:

I have wonderful fans. I love my fans. They like to tell me everything. I've got everything. I've got so much information coming at me, 100 miles an hour, always. It's amazing. I love my fans. But thin-sliced onion is the way to go because it has to cook. Nothing worse than a thicker onion that you're trying to caramelize. You know the science, obviously, behind caramelizing an onion. It takes a long time. But if it's a thin onion, it'll just happen faster and, by the way, if you have this ... The reason that my burger works so well, or the Oklahoma fried onion burger works so well, is because there's some great science going on there. It's pure science, because you have hot, rendered beef, meats, thin-sliced, sweet Vidalia onion, or sweet onion. And when those two things happen, you have magic. Absolute magic. People say, "What is that? Is that a sauce on there?" I said, "Yeah, it's called grease. Grease is a condiment."

Bryan Schaaf:

Can I get that in a squeeze bottle?

George Motz:

That thought had occurred, actually. Grease. The other condiment.

Bryan Schaaf:

Let's turn the page to you're starting to see ... If you go back three, four years ago, smash burgers were so the rage. I say the rage. They have been around for-

George Motz:

Trendy.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. They were very trendy. But you're starting to see kind of a return of the thick burger, right? And our mutual pal and actually former podcast guest, Alvin Cailan from The Burger Show, was making the case for the thick patty. And I think he actually has one or two options over at Amboy in L.A. if you ever get out there. Talk to me about how do you feel about this? Because when people tell me, you see random people post on social media, "I ordered a burger medium and they served it and there was no pink," and all this, and to me it just seems like an argument that never has to happen if we just eat smash burgers. But how do you feel about the thick burger?

George Motz:

Everyone goes back and forth. Do we err on the side of history and we eat the smash burger that tastes great and has been around forever? Or do we go back to almost like a fancier version of a burger? Which is usually to make a burger taste good, you have to use obviously great beef, as you know. But if you can make it thicker, obviously you're going to taste more the beef. I think there's been a bit of a return only because there's a sense that the steakhouse-style burger or the pub-style burger is a very beefy

experience. You really want to have that experience. Smash burgers tend to be enveloped in sauces and cheeses and all lots of goofy crap.

George Motz:

My burger that I make has one ... Well, it has two things in it. It has cheese and onions. That's it. I'm making a classic burger that is still a very beefy experience. But it's not as beefy as a thick patty. That definitely brings on the beefy experience. And for me, I think that's a great experience because I tell people all the time, no matter how big or thick are the patties, you want to still taste the beef. If you start covering up with sauces, you could go make, I hate to say it, but a shrimp burger or a tuna burger at that point.

Diana Clark:

I agree with that. I feel like a lot of times people just add all this stuff on there. I'm like, you're losing the whole point of the burger. I mean, if you have a bun on there, that's plenty of stuff that you're competing with on top of that. But yeah, I do think there's a special occasion for it. There's some times where I do. But it has to be seasoned right, too. I think that's the biggest challenge with your thicker burger is that a lot of people under-season it, and then all of a sudden they forgot about the whole center of the patty. They season the top and the bottom, but that's it. It's like, you've missed the meat in the middle. You've got to make sure we get some flavor in there too. And that's usually when they start adding their avocado and peanut butter and all that on top.

Bryan Schaaf:

Who does that? Peanut butter?

George Motz:

I'm kidding. That sounds great. No, I'm kidding.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm a big fan of a peanut butter and jelly burger. Full disclosure. But yeah, I will say there's actually a restaurant that opened just 30 minutes from here called South Street Grille, in Ashland. It's really close to my house. They do a thick patty, and I don't want to admit how many of them I've eaten. Every one of them, I have enjoyed. And that's kind of caused me to rethink, maybe there is room for these thicker burgers.

Bryan Schaaf:

All right, two things I want to touch on before we let you go. First, you mentioned earlier the deep-fried burger. When I think of a deep-fried burger, I think of Dyer's in Memphis, Tennessee, who famously they were open for a long time, they got a new location, and they actually had a little parade to parade their frying oil that they've cooked all these burgers in down the street to the new location. What's going on in a deep-fried burger that's not going on in a traditionally flame-grilled or a flattop?

Diana Clark:

The deep friedness, I guess, versus your flattop. I mean, I guess it depends on the thickness of the patty and everything that you're going to have. Your deep-fried burger is going to be a different heat transfer than you would on the actual flattop itself. That's going to be your huge difference. I think you're going

to get, honestly, a better, that browning, the Maillard reaction, you're going to get it better on the flattop than you would in your deep-fried burger based on your heat source and everything like that. But you're also going to get the extra grease from deep frying, so yeah. I don't know.

George Motz:

There are places in the Midwest that still do, like we were just talking about, outside of Dayton, in Miamisburg. If you go down to Kentucky, there's a place called Dovie's. Dovie's used to cook in beef fat. I think it was actually pork fat. And now they've had to switch over to canola oil. It's not quite the same thing. But if you have the temperature of the oil just right, the oil actually doesn't really go into the beef. It actually goes in the other direction. It's considered to be a source of heat, but it's not actually ... People think it just soaks right in. But if you have the temperature of the oil just so, it will cook with the thing you have in that oil. You have the addition, though, of the beef fat rendering out into whatever oil you're cooking in, so you're got this weird transfer of greases and oils, which is pretty pronounced.

George Motz:

In the case of, what's it called? Dyer's in Memphis. What they do, they would just drop a fat patty in there. They take the beef and they almost smear it flat, like a piece of paper. And they take it off of this marble surface they have in the restaurant and drop it into the oil. So, now it's paper thin. It's literally almost like a hamburger potato chip. Hamburger chip. And this thing cooks in a second, flash fries. And because it's so thin, it just becomes crispy. It becomes a very crispy experience. It's bizarre. You can get a triple. It's not that big of a deal. They're small. Their patties are about this big. They start this big, and then they shrink to that. And you go put it onto a bun with some mustard, pickle and onion, pow. Think of the deep-fried hamburger chip.

Bryan Schaaf:

You could probably federally register that as a trademark, you know?

George Motz:

There you go.

Bryan Schaaf:

Deep-fried hamburger chips. That's way better than kale chips, I'll tell you that. All right. The last thing, and it is one of those things you cannot have George Motz on your podcast and not talk about specific places to get burgers. The guy, everywhere, I'll be like, "Hey, what's over here?" And he'll be like, "Well, go over here." You just know instinctively. My daughter had a soccer game over the weekend over in Akron, and it was like, "We're not going home without stopping at Swensons." So, we loaded up on Galley Boys and-

George Motz:

Galley Boys.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's delightful, right? I'm going to be selfish here. We're able to track where most of our listeners are coming from. I'm going to give you a state, and if you could just throw out a few places. This is sort of

like a game show, right? No pressure. Because if you don't have any recommendations in a particular state, we can just cut it and we can just act like ... Don't worry, man. We're here. We're here for you.

George Motz:

Yeah, no, no. Hopefully, I don't need that.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. All right, number one, not surprising, Ohio. Give me your top two or three.

George Motz:

I don't play favorites, just so you know.

Bryan Schaaf:

Understood.

George Motz:

But my favorites are in my book, that's what I like to say. I have 200 favorites. They're in my book. Ohio is a really, you know this, hamburger-rich state. Not just about Swensons. I mean, Swensons is a great experience. I would say Swensons is one of my favorites, for sure. But you go to the other side of the state, I got to tell you, sorry. I don't know why, but in Eastern Ohio there's not as much stuff as there are in Western Ohio. Western Ohio is loaded. Loaded. I mean, you've got K's. K's in Troy. You've got the Hamburger Wagon in Miamisburg. You've got Wilson's Sandwich Shop in Findlay. You've got The Spot! It goes on and on and on. What's it called? Zip's Café. I love Zip's Café in Cincinnati. Excellent. Too many to choose from.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm going to throw on during the pandemic when we're quarantined, I was like, "I got to go do something." I threw the kids in the car. We drove to Lima to get Kewpee Burger. It was phenomenal, right?

George Motz:

That's a good one.

Bryan Schaaf:

Man. So good. So good. All right. You passed the first test. Number two, Illinois.

George Motz:

Illinois, okay. Illinois is actually one of the greatest states for what people are now calling the lacy edge burger. A friend of mine, [Titus 00:32:33], who is a food expert from the Midwest, mostly from Chicago area, alerted me to this trend. Trend, not at all. The history of the lacy edge burger which exists literally from St. Louis all the way up to Chicago. Almost to Chicago. One of the most famous is a chain called Schoop's. Schoop's is a chain in Illinois that makes a lacy edged burger. And they're all over the state. Not all over, but there's a bunch of them in northern Illinois. Also ... Oh no, what did we say? Illinois. Sorry, I got Indiana mixed up. Sorry.

George Motz:

Illinois. There's a place called the Moonshine Store. If you ever get a chance-

Diana Clark:

Yes.

George Motz:

You know Moonshine?

Diana Clark:

It's, like, 20 minutes away from my husband's home town.

George Motz:

Come on.

Diana Clark:

We have gone. I swear, it is like a destination to go to.

George Motz:

[inaudible 00:33:16] goes there.

Diana Clark:

Oh, I know. But when you do go there, it's packed. And they're only open from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, and on certain days.

George Motz:

They only make it if they want. It's like, "We're only going to make 50 today." Okay. "We're closing."

Diana Clark:

Yeah. I love that place. We actually had two exchange students from Italy with us one summer and we made sure to bring them home and bring them there. We were like, "This is a true American meal right here, so you're going to sit down and eat it." Yeah.

George Motz:

And the view. The view of just cornfields, there.

Diana Clark:

Yeah.

George Motz:

Wow. I'm amazed you know the Moonshine Store. No one knows the Moonshine Store. Wow. It's literally not on the way to anything.

Diana Clark:

Yeah. It's in the middle of nowhere, too.

George Motz:

Like, an hour from-

Diana Clark:

Like, driving through [inaudible 00:33:57] and then, yeah. It's right there, yeah.

George Motz:

Hour from Terre Haute.

Diana Clark:

Yes.

George Motz:

That's it. So, yeah. How did I do with Illinois? Okay?

Bryan Schaaf:

Well-

George Motz:

We've seen Illinois. Then you have all up to Chicago, we can skip.

Bryan Schaaf:

Nailed it. Nailed it. How about Texas?

George Motz:

Oh, God. Texas. How long is this podcast? Texas is obviously one of the most burger-rich states in the country. And probably one of the most burger-rich regions in the world. Obviously, because they get all that great beef ... Wow. I don't even know where to begin. Texas, what? There's a great hamburger experience that no one's ever going to get a hamburger at, so I'll just tell you anyway. It's a place in Rockwall, Texas, mark my words, called Boots Burger. And if you actually manage to get a burger in Rockwall at Boots Burger, congratulations. I'll tell you right now, you're not going to get one. You can call ahead, you can beg, you can give them tons of money. You're not getting the burger. It's a local's only burger, and it's sold out of the guy's house, basically. And it's a guy ... I think he works at a factory. I think a car factory nearby, or something. And he goes home for lunch and makes burgers for two hours, basically.

Diana Clark:

No way.

George Motz:

And then goes back to work.

Diana Clark:

That is awesome.

George Motz:

That's all I'm going to tell you. And also I mean, you go to Austin, you've got ... In Austin, you've got great places in Houston, some great places in Dallas. I mean, Keller's Drive-In, a classic. Where else in America can you drive up, somebody brings a burger to your car and a beer. I mean, come on. That's as good as it gets. Give me a roadie.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's the most Texas thing I've ever heard, I think.

George Motz:

Exactly. Exactly. Great.

Bryan Schaaf:

I will not subject you ... The next one, I had two left. The next one on the list is California, but I imagine that's probably a bit like Texas, right?

George Motz:

You can give me a hard one, like North Dakota or something.

Bryan Schaaf:

There's only, like, three people there, though.

George Motz:

It's a good point, yeah. But they're good people. They're really good.

Bryan Schaaf:

Amen.

George Motz:

Those three, they're awesome. They're awesome. Let's see. In California, oh my God, again, it's like Los Angeles alone is the epicenter of driving burger culture, clearly. I mean, Rocky's Crown Pub in San Diego is amazing. Rocky's Crown Pub, if you've ever heard of it before, it's fantastic. Amazing. A place in Carpinteria, is that what it's ... Carpinteria, called The Spot. One of ... What's her name? Julia Child's favorite burger spot from back in the day. California, wow. I mean, I do have a favorite that again, you'll probably never get to. It's a place called George's. George's Burgers and Insults, yeah.

Diana Clark:

Oh my gosh.

George Motz:

Good luck, okay? That's all I'm going to say. George's Burgers and Insults. It's in Thousand Palms. It's called Thousand Palms? No, Cathedral City. Sorry, Cathedral City, California.

Bryan Schaaf:

George's.

George Motz:

That place, you walk in and if you're ... You're not getting the burger. It's as simple as that. He'll literally be like, "You. Out." What do you mean, out? "I don't like your face. Get out." It's like the Soup Nazi.

Diana Clark:

That's what I was just thinking.

George Motz:

But the thing is, if you get to know him he's the sweetest, nicest guy in the world. Burgers are off the charts. You walk into that place and it's like guys with tattoos and Harley gear on, and dudes just came off the golf course in Palm Springs wearing pink polo shirts. And they're all mixed together, and it's wonderful. Wonderful.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's amazing. All right, last one. Georgia.

George Motz:

Georgia is a funny state for burgers. There aren't too many old-school, classic places there. Ann's Snack Bar, if it's even still open. Miss Ann, unfortunately, passed away a couple of years ago. Another place you aren't going to get a burger unless you're super nice. You had to be really nice to get a burger there. I think it's changed a lot, but she had something on the menu called the Ghetto Burger, and it was just a burger that was bigger than my head, but tasted great. You could finish it and take a nap in the afternoon. But let's see, Georgia is a weird state for burgers. I don't know a whole lot there but the classic. There is a new place, though, that I love very much. It's called NFA Burger. I'll let you try and figure out what NFA stands for.

Bryan Schaaf:

Billy Kramer, yeah.

George Motz:

Billy Kramer. You know Billy. You know Billy.

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

George Motz:

That's a great burger. He knows what he's doing. Someone said to me, "Why should I go to this place? It's in the Chevron." It's like, yeah. That's exactly where you find a good burger, is in a gas station.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. It's like going to Buc-ee's.

George Motz:

Exactly.

Bryan Schaaf:

All right. I had this whole diatribe about chains and things like that, but I know you like to celebrate the small guys, right? So, I won't put you on the spot for the big chains, but I do have one question just because I know this is like fighting words depending on where you're at, right? If you have a preference, Krystal burger versus White Castle?

George Motz:

Wow. Here's the thing. I'll tell you this much. White Castle is unquestionably, I would say, the most historically important hamburger restaurant in the world. And that's because they go back to the beginning. They were the ones who cleaned up the hamburger's image and made it something we all like to enjoy today. If it had not been for White Castle, and the guts they had to sell hamburgers and change the culture of the hamburger, we wouldn't have hamburgers today, period. That said, I've eaten at White Castle recently and not do great. It's just the flavor. The flavor is still there, but it's just not ... Depends on where you go, obviously. Krystal, on the other hand, I think is actually a better original slider experience. And at one point, everybody was copying White Castle and people had to stop because White Castle was suing everybody, and it's not surprisingly.

George Motz:

But a few of them snuck out of the legal realm, somehow, and kept doing it. And one of them is Krystal. I think Krystal is a great burger experience, really.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. Well said. You heard it from the expert himself. On that note, we are going to let you go back to your burger ventures. Before we roll, you've got a 50-pound bag of onions in front of you right now.

George Motz:

Oh, it's a 10-pound. There's five of these.

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, there's five of them? All right. Before we let you go, though, give us some plugs. What do people need to do to ride the George Motz train?

George Motz:

Well first, Instagram. Everything I do, all the news, all the news I break, all the hamburger news I break is on Instagram. Motzburger, M-O-T-Z-B-U-R-G-E-R. My website also has a lot of stuff on it,

GeorgeMotz.com. But more importantly, we just started planning season four of Burger Scholar Sessions, which shoots next week. And then at the end of August. August, 2021, the season four launches, and we're very excited about it.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. And to be clear, that is not a studio meant to look like an apartment.

George Motz:

No.

Bryan Schaaf:

That is shot from your home, right?

George Motz:

That's actually home, yeah. And we shot the show during the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, they said to me, "If we sent you some cameras and some lights, could you shoot a show?" Sure, why not? And I sent them the footage back and it was all socially distanced, totally safe. And we ended up doing ... We're on our fourth season now.

Diana Clark:

That's awesome.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's amazing.

George Motz:

Insane.

Bryan Schaaf:

Outstanding. On that note, George Motz, the author, filmmaker, you name it. Burger Scholars is, I think, the title that I'm just going to throw ... I think that says it all. The man who knows more about hamburgers. I always think I know a lot about hamburgers. I bow in your presence, sir. Oh, man. You're a legend, right? We appreciate you for joining us here on the Meat Speak podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. If this is your first time tuning in, we have two seasons. You can go back and catch 30 episodes in season one. This is the next to last one in season two, but you can find us across all of your major podcasting platforms, Google Play, Apple, Spotify, and a bevy of ones that I've never even heard of. You could also visit us at [www ...](http://www.CertifiedAngusBeef.com/podcast) Do I even need to say www? That's so 1999, isn't it? On the World Wide Web. CertifiedAngusBeef.com/podcast.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm Bryan Schaaf, for meat scientist Diana Clark, the gentleman who is not here, Chef Tony Biggs ... I think he's over cooking for cowboys, actually, across the parking lot. We appreciate you for tuning in here on the Meat Speaks podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand.