

Greenwich Time

Burger bonanza: Local restaurant wins tasting contest

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Cos Cob resident Kory Wollins owns Burgers, Shakes & Fries in Greenwich, home of the award-winning cheeseburger. (Chris Preovolos/Staff photo)

Kory Wollins is in hamburger heaven.

The Cos Cob resident owns Burgers, Shakes & Fries in Greenwich, winner of a recent hamburger competition hosted by the publishers of the "Anderson Guide to Enjoying Greenwich Connecticut."

The restaurant beat 17 other town eateries in the contest, judged by tasters sent out by Carolyn and Jerry Anderson, owners of Anderson Associates, publishers of the guide.

Wollins' burgers, which are served on toast, received kudos such as: "Fantastic hamburger with a plethora of options on the menu," "The meat was

excellent, cooked just right," and "Overall, one of the best burgers in town" from some of the 226 tasters - I was one - who fanned out across town for the contest.

Wollins was caught off guard



Kory Wollins' Favorite Cheeseburger. (Chris Preovolos/Staff photo)

when Carolyn Anderson called to give him the news.

"I had no idea even what it was. It was great, you know. A lot of places on the list were way above me in price," he says.

As with the rest of his menu, Wollins strives to serve a burger that "has great value."

His burgers are 1/3-pound, 80 percent lean ground chuck seasoned with plenty of salt and pepper and "slung" on a hot griddle. After cooking, the patties are allowed to rest to "assure fluid redistribution," then sandwiched between slices of white bread that have been buttered and toasted on the griddle.

A plain burger sells for \$3.77; toppings - such as saut ed onions, saut ed mushrooms, chili, fried egg or bacon - cost \$1.42 each.

Wollins' favorite way to eat a burger is with

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American cheese, sliced tomato, a couple of hot peppers, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise and a couple of pickles. Though not a fan of onions, he recently had one of his restaurant's hamburgers with gorgonzola and sauteed onions, and pronounced that one delicious, too.

Anderson says she was pleased a local resident won the contest. This marks the eighth time the Andersons have reached out to their real estate clients and supporters for help in rating a food for the guide. In the past, the taste tests were blind - for such fare as ice cream, truffles, pizza and appetizers - and held at the Andersons' home.

This time they tried a new tack.

"We knew we couldn't go for 18 hamburgers. Hamburgers really depend on getting it right, even takeout can't be depended on," says Anderson.

Instead, tasters were given a rating sheet and sent to a specific restaurant.

"I think they had fun. They were very serious about it and I thought it was dear, especially fun to read their comments," Anderson says.

Tasters rated the remaining restaurants as follows: Sundown Saloon, Palomino, L'Escale, Thatway Caf, Katzenberg Caf, Mackenzie's Grill, Ginger Man, Horseneck Tavern, Mac Duff's Public House, Beach House, Joey B's Chili Hub, Landmark Diner, Glory Days, My Favorite Place, Centro, Sound Beach Pizza and Arcuri's Pizza.

The list of restaurants was chosen through tasters' recommendations and by going through the guide for ideas, says Anderson.

"They aren't hamburger places, necessarily, but they have a hamburger on their menu," she explains.

Which food will be rated next for the guide?

Anderson isn't sure, but says soups and breads are among the possibilities.

For Wollins, whose 13 1/2-month-old restaurant can serve as many as 350 burgers in a day, the search for a delicious hamburger always leads him back home.

"I've eaten the burger so many times," he says, but when he eats one at a different establishment and then returns to his restaurant and orders one, he thinks: "Damn, this is better than the burger I just ate."

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Burgers, Shakes & Fries, 302 Delavan Ave., Greenwich; 531-7433.

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RECIPES

Kory Wollins' Favorite Cheeseburger

5 1/3 oz. ground chuck (80 percent lean)

Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper

2 Tblsp. unsalted butter, softened

2 slices firm white bread

2 slices American cheese

2 thick slices ripe tomato

1 kosher dill pickle sliced in rounds

* Preheat a heavy-bottomed saute pan to 425 degrees (a drop of pure canol oil should just start to

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smoke).

* While the pan comes to temp, pat meat into an even 1/2-inch thick, 4 1/2-inch wide round.

* When pan is preheated, carefully add burger to pan, season liberally with salt and pepper, and let cook undisturbed for 2-3 minutes, or until the juices begin to emerge from the top surface.

* While you are waiting for the burger to cook take the butter and spread an even layer on one side of both slices of bread; set aside.

* Carefully flip burger away from you to avoid grease splash, and let cook for an additional 2-3 minutes for medium-rare.

* Remove burger from pan to plate to rest, and cover with two slices of American cheese.

* While burger is resting, wipe the pan clean and add the bread, buttered side down. Cook until golden on one side, then flip over to lightly crisp other side.

* Remove bread from pan and lay on serving plate buttered side down. Place tomato, pickles and rested cheeseburger on top of one slice of bread. Cover with other slice of bread, buttered side up, and enjoy with your favorite condiments. Makes 1 serving.

Note: During cooking, flip the burger once, never press it down with a spatula, liberally salt and pepper, and always let it rest; you will have a great burger every time.

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