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## Burger Kitchen's handcrafted handiwork

**The Los Angeles restaurant with 26 varieties is getting into a groove.**

May 17, 2010

Los Angeles is mad for burgers. We don't just obsessively grill them in our sun-soaked backyards; we also gobble them down at a growing number of gourmet burger spots including [Umami](#), [8 oz. Burger Bar](#) and [the Counter](#). But that's not enough to sate our desire for juicy meat patties. When a new restaurant called Burger Kitchen opened on 3rd Street early last month 2,400 customers descended on it — "Day of the Locust" style — in the first week alone.

"We were hit by the power of the Internet," said co-owner Alan Saffron somewhat ruefully. "We wanted to do a soft opening, but it was a swamp. We could not provide the people with what they wanted at first."

And what they wanted was a new burger fix. [Burger Kitchen](#) gave them not one, but 26 choices. Getting the kitchen up to speed when it came to handcrafting all those combinations took some time, admits Saffron. But he and his son Daniel, who co-owns the restaurant with him, now say that they've got the process down pat.

That seemed to be the case during a recent Wednesday lunch rush when the kitchen cranked out a steady stream of savory hamburgers to salivating diners at the many tables in the large room.

Menu choices read like a meat-eaters' atlas of the world: There's Burger the Greek, made with a lamb patty, feta cheese and kalamata olive tapenade; a Thai chicken burger called Bangkok Visitor, slathered in peanut sauce and wrapped in a lettuce leaf; the Eiffel Tower burger piled with creamy blue cheese and slicked with spicy mustard; the Summersetshire Cheeseburger laced with Worcestershire sauce; a salmon burger topped with baby spinach, grilled tomato and beurre blanc sauce; and the humongous 24-ounce Cowboy Burger that ropes in even the most elastic of stomachs.

The Mountain Burger, with applewood smoked bacon, jalapeños and barbecue sauce, is a messy pile of pounded short rib and prime sirloin chuck that, cooked medium rare, dribbles rivulets of grease and blood into its fluffy 5-inch Ca' d'Oro Bakery bun. A side of beer-battered onion rings that puddle just the right amount of oil at the bottom of their basket provides the perfect accompaniment. As does a Stone Pale Ale, one of 20 craft beers on offer at the folksy wooden bar at the back of the restaurant. There's also a list of 26 wines by the glass or bottle.

Although he has been a talent manager for more than two decades, Alan Saffron is not new to the restaurant business. He owned what he says was the No. 1 steakhouse in his native Sydney, Australia, 30 years ago. For the past 10 years, he cooked for private parties on the side.



"My specialty was steaks, " he said. "I became known as the secret steak chef of Los Angeles."

There's nothing secret about the Burger Kitchen, though. Things have calmed down since the breakneck pace of the first weeks, and now the Wednesday beer-tasting dinners are building quite a following. For \$20 you get a burger, fries and a flight of four beers. Now, that's a value meal.

[jessica.gelt@latimes.com](mailto:jessica.gelt@latimes.com)

### **Burger Kitchen**

**Where:** 8048 W. 3rd St., L.A.

**When:** 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Mondays to Fridays; 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays

**Price:** burgers, \$9 to \$20; beer and wine, \$5 to \$15.

**Contact:** (323) 944-0503

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