

HEALTH

Gardens doctors search for best burger in area

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Hamburger facts (according to the USDA): The good (high in protein), the bad (high in cholesterol), and the ugly (fast food burgers are high in calories).

So, these docs, members of Palm Beach Burger Doctors, play it safe, because they stick to high-end hamburgers and eat them in moderation.

David Lickstein, a Palm Beach Gardens plastic surgeon, known as The Godfather by fellow burger doctors, founded the club.

"A couple of us used to get together to hang out and we were always talking about where to get a good burger," he explained. "Then, the Today Show featured Burger of the Month Club in New York, and we knew we had found our calling."

"That was about a year and a half ago, and we made a 10-year commitment to find the best burger in South Florida. We started in Palm Beach Gardens because we work at the Gardens hospital, but we are slowly increasing our radius."

The burger docs meet once every four to six weeks, because of health considerations, club members admitted, and, for a while, they kept a low profile, for culinary and professional reasons.

"At first, we didn't want anyone to know who we were, but that's long gone away," Lickstein said, adding that an occasional burger is really okay. "My wife cooks fish and chicken, so this is my only burger during the month."

Club members rank burgers from various restaurants from best to worst, but each doctor has a different idea about what makes a good burger. Some, for example, like their burger doctored up with cheese.

"We don't talk about it until we are halfway done, but a lot of looks go around," Lickstein said. "And Darryl Miller is the toughest critic."

Lickstein put Café Boulud's burger at the top of his list. And he notes, there's a big difference between a five-dollar burger and a \$20 burger, but, nevertheless, in his opinion, the Grease Burger Bar on Clematis has a very good burger.

It all comes down to the quality of the meat, and the better burgers, he's found, are ground on-site every day. The combination of lean meat to fat has a lot to do with tastiness, too.

His final words, concerning the burgers and health, are just what you'd imagine: "Be reasonable about what you eat and don't go overboard."

The Godfather's right-hand-man, Darryl Miller, was sitting just to The Godfather's right. A Palm Beach Gardens cardiologist, he works at Cleveland Clinic. "They call me the Connoisseur," Miller said.

Concerning his daily diet, he eats fish and salads at home, and a burger is unusual. "In limited amounts, red meat is okay," he said. "My philosophy in life is moderation."

beef, chicken and pasta. "Moderation is the key to eating. And going to the gym," he prescribed.

His favorite burger was at Asian Fin, but he can't pinpoint why. "I can't dissect it. I just enjoyed the whole thing."

Brett Rosenberg, a Jupiter endodontist with the code name B MAN, was another founding member who said unashamedly, "I love hamburgers."

"The burger club members are a

For best burgers, he votes with The Godfather and The Connoisseur: Boulud (because it's high end and has style) and Grease (traditional pub burger).

Noah Weisberg, the Burgermeister, is a Mohs surgeon who practices at Palm Beach Gardens Medical Center and Jupiter Medical Center. This is a nice indulgence, he said. His favorite burger is served at Grease. "Sometimes, the ambience, or the lack thereof, plays a part in the equation. I liked the atmosphere at Grease. It was casual and enjoyable, and it's a good burger."

Jeffrey Garelick, called GI, a Palm Beach Gardens gastroenterologist, said that eating burgers gives him expertise in all things gastronomic, and he didn't mind being quoted on that. "I don't think any of us eat burgers on a regular basis, but it's nice to get together once a month and have a treat."

"We eat very little beef at home. My wife is a wonderful cook, and our kids eat ethnic food --curries and Asian things. Once a month, a burger is okay."

Grease serves up his favorite burger, which, he said, is cooked perfectly and the size is perfect, too.

Oren Lifshitz, a Palm Beach Gardens dermatologist, said he has two code names. "I'm from Pittsburg, so I'm The Pitts Burger and I'm also the O Man, which stands for the Original Pitts Burger."

Basically, he said his family eats a very diverse diet. "Chicken, fish, pasta, whatever we can get the kids to eat."

"I feel everything is okay in moderation. As a dermatologist, I don't say don't go outside, but wear sunscreen. I feel the same way about dietary experiences."

His favorite hamburger place is Three Forks. "The meat is extremely lean, and at the same time the burgers are juicy and perfectly seasoned."

Rommel Francisco, a Palm Beach Gardens orthopedic surgeon with no code name is relatively new to the group. This was his third meeting.

"I'm a rookie at rating hamburgers," he admitted. He also said red meat is his favorite food and the more grease, the better.

"Beef is a good source of iron. I don't care about the heart. Let the cardiologists deal with that. I just want my patients to heal and red meat is a good source of nutrition and for the healing of the bone. It helps build up blood count, so that patients can avoid transfusions, and keeps them from getting anemia. Protein from meat will help with healing."

His favorite burger is at Grease, "for all around tastiness and greasiness." ■



The Burger Doctors dining at Mortons The Steakhouse, West Palm Beach. Photos by Clay Willis



He seconds Lickstein's choices: Café Boulud and Grease. "It's all about the intense flavor. Products off the shelf are pretty generic. To stand out, it's got to be unusually good, and these two places fit in that category."

William Gans, a urologist who lives in Palm Beach Gardens, and is nicknamed "Big Willy G," is a charter member of the club, which now has 16 members.

Gans doesn't eat burgers at home, and mixes up his diet, he said, eating

good group of guys and this is a good way to get away from our wives once a month. You can print that," he said.

The group is no longer incognito, he adds. "Restaurants give us special treatment – private rooms, specialty burgers and other perks."

He, too, eats very healthy at home, with a diet that includes fresh vegetables and very little red meat. However, he said: "I'm not aware of any studies linking eating beef with dental health."