



WASHINGTON

CLARK'S RESTAURANT

731 US 101, 6 Miles South of Aberdeen | Cosmopolis, WA 98537 | 360-538-1487
Mon-Sun 10 am-7 pm | www.clarksrestaurant.com

Every once in a while, I get a tip that is not exactly vetted. Most of these tips require more research, and hopefully, new discoveries are made. But in the case of Clark's Restaurant, I could find nothing. My local experts had only heard of the place, and information was sketchy. This is likely because Clark's is not near anything. It is two hours southwest of Seattle, deep in the woods. There was only one solution: jump in a car and get out there.

The tiny town of Artich, Washington, was supposed to be "Arctic" but a spelling error one hundred years ago sealed its fate. I was about a mile from my first visit to this outpost in the woods and thought to myself, *If the burger is crap, at least the drive is beautiful*. Little did I know that I was about to strike the hamburger jackpot.

Clark's plays the part of restaurant and community center well. The cozy country store interior is a mix of tables with green-checked tablecloths and a counter with swivel stools. Antiques on the walls and wagon-wheel hanging lights complete the scene.



The banter between the owner's daughter, Ranie Creamer, and the regulars is priceless and real. I heard Ranie say to one customer as he was leaving, "Come back when you can't stay too long!"

The menu is enormous at Clark's, and the servings are large. Burger options range from a single quarter-pound burger up to a double with thirteen ounces of beef on a six-inch bun. The most popular burger is the deluxe cheeseburger with bacon, which comes standard with lettuce, pickles, tomato, onion, and Clark's "special sauce," which is really the Northwest's signature mayo-mustard burger sauce called Goop (see recipe, page 410).

Clark's rolls and presses balls of fresh beef onto patties with a heavy, custom-made weight. Years ago, they ordered fresh, preformed patties from their supplier, but Rich made the switch to bulk beef when he wasn't getting what he wanted. "When you cook a preformed patty, it sort of cups up—know what I mean?" The burgers are cooked on a well-seasoned flattop and get a nice griddle crunch with a craggy edge.

At first it was a gas station, opened in 1923. The Clark family bought it in 1960 and used it to sell their homemade ice cream, burgers, and more. It was sold again in 1984 to the Lewis family, who ran it until 1997, when Rich and Kathy Pacana found the restaurant for sale and in disarray. They bought it, cleaned it up, and "We put the whole valley to work!" Kathy remembered. She worked at Clark's years earlier and explained, "I knew what it was—and what it could be again." Kathy and Rich were high school sweethearts and grew up in the area. Many decades and a few marriages later, they reconnected, married, and now run Clark's with their daughter. It's not often I find a burger destination this remote that can actually make great

burgers. There had to be something behind this place, and sure enough there was... and the answer blew my burger mind.

The burger roots run deep at Clark's. Many burgers in Washington contain a dollop of tasty Goop, but no one seems to have mastered the regional sauce like Eastside Big Tom, one of my favorite burger joints in America. Rich worked for Bob Eagan at Big Tom in Olympia (so his burger lineage is sound), and everyone knows their Goop sauce is a trade secret. I was shocked to find out that the Goop at Clark's is the *exact same recipe*. Turns out Bob Eagan gave them the recipe as a wedding gift! And to make matters even more bizarre, after leaving the burger business, Bob became a Unitarian minister and officiated their wedding.

At lunchtime, Clark's is filled to capacity with hungry customers. I'm not sure where they come from, because the place is surrounded with nothing but trees. "People come here on the way to the beach," Ranie told me. Beach? Nearby Cohasset Beach on the Pacific is only thirty minutes away. If that's where you are headed, you must make a stop at Clark's, coming and going.