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# WA's best burgers: 4 spots make new book

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By Jackie Varriano  
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GEORGE MOTZ, THE AUTHOR of “Hamburger America,” has eaten a lot of burgers since he published the first edition of his book in 2008, crisscrossing the U.S. to find a *very* specific sort of burger joint.

“You have to have a burger on the menu for at least 20 years,” Motz says. “A great burger and a great story, but the story is the least important part.”

The fourth edition was published April 14 and among the 220 burger joints listed, four are in Washington — Seattle burger institutions Dick’s Drive-In and Red Mill Burgers plus two that are a bit more under the radar: Clark’s in Artic and Eastside Big Tom in Olympia.

“Clark’s was new to the third edition,” Motz says. “Artic is a beautiful drive. There’s nothing out there the whole way and then suddenly there’s this restaurant! It’s a true destination.”



At Clark's Restaurant in Artic, the burgers are hand-pressed to order. (George Motz / Courtesy of Running Press Adult)

At Clark’s Restaurant in Artic, the burgers are hand-pressed to order. (George Motz / Courtesy of Running Press Adult)

That is no typo — Artic is an unincorporated community that runs along Highway 101, south of Montesano and Cosmopolis and north of Raymond. You might only pass by it if you're on your way to Long Beach or Tokeland. Named after Arta Saunders, a spelling error recorded by the post office is the reason for the unusual name of Artic.

Opened by the Clark family in 1960, Clark's Restaurant is housed in a former gas station, the exterior defined by rustic stone pillars and a large green sign. A giant, wooden weathered ice cream cone with the words "Home Made" is affixed to a streetlight to further draw in road traffic, an easy feat, according to Bry Brouillard, a server who has worked at Clark's for the past five years.

"We are a staple to a lot of people to and from the beach," Brouillard said during a recent phone call. "And once we've got you, we've got you hooked."

Clark's has been sold twice over the years, but Kathy Pacana, her late husband, Rich, and their daughter Ranie Creamer have run it since 1997. The interior is homey, filled with green-checked tablecloths and plenty of rustic antique furnishings like wagon wheels and logging saws.

"I am so spoiled I cannot eat burgers and fries anywhere else," Brouillard says with a laugh.



The interior of Clark's Restaurant features rustic antique furnishings like wagon wheels and logging saws. (Jackie Varriano / The Seattle Times)

As for the other Washington joints included in the book, Motz was especially taken with the double double from Eastside Big Tom, a drive-thru shack in Olympia. The burgers there come slathered in Goop (a concoction nearly identical to the sauce at Clark's), a mix of mayo, sour cream, mustard and sweet relish. Legend has it the real recipe for Goop was given to Rich Pacana by the owner of Big Tom as a wedding gift, bringing a bit of Olympia to Artic at Clark's.

In Seattle, Motz is a fan of the Dick's deluxe and Red Mill's double bacon deluxe with cheese.

As a whole, the book reads as a love letter to the humble burger and the longtime, family-run places that serve them. The spots that feel more like community centers and less like soulless fast food. Motz says his travels have taught him a lot about how different parts of the country approach a burger, and there have been some surprises.

“Texas is a great place to eat burgers. They're just Texas burgers, specific to Texas. Wisconsin and Ohio — those are very burger diverse areas right there,” he says. “All of the upper Midwest has good burgers. Illinois specifically. They love burgers and are everywhere, unaffected by time or trend.”

Sounds like it's time for a burger-inspired road trip — with Artic as the first stop.

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**Jackie Varriano:** Jackie Varriano is a food writer at *The Seattle Times* who covers neighborhood restaurants around Western Washington, reporting on the ways food and communities intersect.