

South Carolina

# People & Places™

A BONUS SECTION FOR OUR SOUTH CAROLINA READERS



## Top 5 Pimiento Cheeseburgers

Our first-ever quest for the state's very best yields a delicious list of can't-miss winners. **page 10**

PHOTOGRAPH: GARY CLARK



Darius Rucker rocks the country charts from Charleston. **page 8**



Allurette Jones serves healthful, delicious, and holistic soul food. **page 3**

# The State's Very Best Pimiento Cheeseburgers

South Carolina invented the pimiento cheeseburger. We sampled 19 of them to bring you the best.

BY DONNA FLORIO

The pimiento cheeseburger is a stroke of culinary genius straight from South Carolina. The hot beef patty with luscious, pimiento-flecked streams of golden cheese dribbling down its side is diet-busting and cholesterol-raising but nearly irresistible.

Reportedly popularized in the 1960s at

Columbia's long-closed Dairy Bar, the burger is now on the menu of almost every diner, grill, tavern, drive-in, and cafe in South Carolina. It has become one of the state's culinary icons.

We ate our fill of these stellar sandwiches, seeking the tastiest. Below, you'll find our top five, in order. Check them out for yourself, and see what you think.



## THE PERFECT PIMIENTO BURGER

From Greenville's Smoke on the Water

**The Bun**  
Able to support a big, messy burger. Toasted is a bonus.

**Lettuce**  
Preferably a leaf, not shredded

**Tomato**  
One or two slices, not too thin

**Onions**  
Optional

**Cheese**  
Ample but not excessive. Homemade with Cheddar a big plus.

**The Burger** Juicy, flavorful, not too firmly packed or over-seasoned

## Our Top Five

**1 Smoke on the Water, Greenville**  
All the components shine. The pimiento cheese is homemade, with fire-roasted red peppers for a kick. It's slathered atop a succulent beef patty on a freshly baked brioche bun, then layered with lettuce, tomato, and red onions. This burger is a luscious monster. The place itself is hopping on weekends, so plan to get there early. 1 Augusta Street; 864-232-9091

**2 Nu-Way Restaurant & Lounge, Spartanburg**  
The meat in this no-frills roadhouse offers hints of Worcestershire sauce, while cayenne adds a little heat to the cheese (Monterey Jack and extra-sharp Cheddar). The bun isn't special, but a slice of tomato and a crisp lettuce leaf help. 373 East Kennedy Street; 864-582-9685

**3 Desserts & More, Columbia**  
In a cafe known for sweets, the excellent pimiento cheese with its diced green tomatoes and

chiles won us over. Each half-pound patty is topped with 4 ounces of cheese plus lettuce and tomato. Order it with a slice of cake too. 4611 Hardscrabble Road; 803-699-8800

**4 Poe's Tavern, Sullivan's Island**  
We like the Gold-Bug Plus, a name inspired by Edgar Allan Poe, who lived nearby. The Angus burger is capped with a nice portion of pimiento cheese (featuring ricotta cheese and smoked red pimientos). 2210 Middle Street; 843-883-0083

**5 Kinch's, Rock Hill**  
The bistro's pimiento cheese, from a family recipe, tastes of nutty sharp Cheddar on a juicy slow-cooked burger. Added bonus: crispy, thick-cut fries. 123 Elk Avenue; 803-327-4923

**RUNNERS-UP:**  
Tanner's Big Orange (Greenville), The Corner Grill (Myrtle Beach), Ruth's Drive-In (Hartsville), Mathias Sandwich Shop (Columbia) \*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SMOKE ON THE WATER

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