

BURGERING ON!

With Exeter's sixth burger joint due to open in 2016, food blogger CHRIS GOWER compares the city's principal patty purveyors

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Opposite: Exeter is only the third city in the UK to get a Burgerfest, after Torquay and Taunton
Top: chain restaurant Byron Burger gets in on the act in Princesshay
Below: Hubbox fans are evangelical about their hip indie burger joint; Exeter's original burger place, Urban Burger, is known for its home-smoked beef

Take a walk through Exeter and you're likely to smell the flame-grilled waft of burgers. Not counting McDonalds or Burger King, Exeter is now home to five different burger restaurants, all different in their own ways – but with

our sixth restaurant opening next year, is Exeter nearly burgered out?

Love for the gourmet burger has been sizzling in the British psyche since Gourmet Burger Kitchen was set up in Battersea back in 2001. Fast forward a few years and the recession gave diners a reason to tighten their belts; fewer people could afford to eat out like they used to. Diners were yearning for comfort food during hard times, which helped restaurants such as Byron, MeatLiquor, Patty & Bun and Honest Burgers to grow in popularity by serving burgers using fresh meat and superior ingredients for a low cost.

With a large student population all looking for a cost-effective comforting meal, it's not surprising that burger bars are blooming in Exeter. But what do they offer the rest of us? Here's the lowdown...



URBAN BURGER

Exeter's first burger restaurant brought an urban vibe to dining in Exeter. Serving handmade, gluten-free patties, their chicken burger The Bolt Burger attracted the attention of GQ magazine last year, who featured it in their Top 5 Alternative Burgers. Ingredients are locally sourced, and they have a fantastic Smoke Shack menu, thanks to their own genuine American in-house smoker.

44 Queen St, Exeter EX4 3SR;
01392 422999; www.urbanburger.co.uk



RUBY MODERN DINER

Next to open was Ruby Modern Diner, a stylish and sophisticated interpretation of the traditional American diner that has won Taste Of The West Gold for three years in a row. Focusing on using

locally sourced ingredients, their buns are baked by Emma's Bread less than a mile away, and they have their own herd of Ruby Cattle, which they use in their patties, from Copplestone Farm. As milkshakes go, their 'Five Dollar Shakes' stands out as a real winner.

74 Queen St, Exeter EX4 3RX;
01392 436168; www.rubyburger.com

HUB BOX

Then came Hub Box, fashionable and not unlike a London burger joint with its 'pop-up'-style décor. Their patties use Cornish rare breed beef, none of their burgers broach the £10 mark, and you can have a satisfying meal here for under £15. Their Big Kahuna burger was recognised by *Casual Dining* magazine as Britain's best burger in February this year. Excellent value for money if you're looking for a quick bite.

183 Sidwell Street, Exeter EX4 6RD;
01392 258737; www.hubbox.co.uk

BYRON BURGERS

In 2014, we received our first chain burger restaurant. Byron Burgers is an 'American-inspired' hamburger restaurant that serves posh hamburgers, with over 50 branches throughout the UK, mostly in London. They use traditional bread buns and Aberdeen Angus Beef for their 6oz patties (smaller than Ruby and Urban Burger). Tasty!

26 Bedford Street, Princesshay, Exeter EX1 1GJ;
01392 433340; www.byronhamburgers.com

BURGERFEST

Opened in 2015, there are three restaurants under the Burgerfest brand, each one a quirky haven for the geek inside us all. Exeter's Burgerfest is no different, boasting a Sega Room (with Sega Megadrive set-up) and a ping-pong table. Here is another burger restaurant where none of the patties broach the £10 mark. Excellent value, and a more flame-grilled burger than others in Exeter, which gives them an edge.

The Old Malthouse,
Bartholomew Street East, Exeter EX4 3BG;
01392 498181; www.burger-fest.co.uk

Gourmet Burger Kitchen will arrive in the new Queen Street Dining Quarter in 2016, giving Exeter six burger restaurants.

Too many? You could argue that such an abundance of minced beef gives diners greater choice, and, with the competition just yards away, also puts pressure on established restaurants to maintain standards.

However, I think we're reaching peak burger. After GBK opens next year, even for me as a burger lover, any more will be too many. It's great to have a choice, obviously, but one can have too much of a good thing. So for now, here's to Exeter's magnificent six! **EL**

Chris blogs at www.eatingexeter.wordpress.com and tweets at @EatingExeter