

## Total Carnage! Gourmet Burger Battle – 26 Beach vs. Umami vs. Father’s Office vs. Golden State vs. Morton’s vs. Anisette vs. Lucky Devils vs. 25 Degrees vs. 8 oz vs. Rustic Canyon! [Review] w/ Pics!

(Formatted with All Pictures here:

<http://exilekiss.blogspot.com/2010/04/total-carnage-gourmet-burger-battle-26.html>

April 11, 2010 - The following is the last written account of a tragic burger expedition across Southern California by its last survivor. What started out as a fun topic over drinks, soon turned into a "Burger Throwdown" involving a bunch of L.A. foodies, which then turned into a giant black hole from which no one could escape from.

I shall attempt to document the carnage and devastation left in the wake of this foolhardy and utterly stupid endeavor, in the hopes that if anyone reads this letter, that they may use this as a warning to never attempt something so ridiculous. It's a sordid tale, of massive rises in cholesterol intake, crying and weeping amidst accusations of one person causing someone else to gain weight, broken relationships, cell phones going straight to voicemail, all to track down a piece of Beef stuck between some Bread. :)

[Some Time Ago...]

It began so simply, so innocuously. Some dear (former :) friends and I were enjoying drinks when someone asked, "OK. Best Burger in L.A.?" And then the restaurant names began to fly: "Father's Office!" "Umami!" "Anisette" and after everyone started to defend their picks, we realized the only way to settle this was to have a "simple" Burger Battle. It was easy enough - or so we thought - we would simply meet up and try the ~3 - 4 places that were thrown out and vote for our favorites.

Ah, if things were only that simple. :)

I threw out one ground rule that we had to visit each place at least 3 times, to make sure of consistency, and to give each restaurant a 2nd chance in case we hit them on an "off day."

But then the list of 3 or 4 places soon grew to 11. One of my Burger Hounds quickly blurted out, "Psh! No problem! This should be fun!" And we all dove in headfirst, with none of us realizing the magnitude of what we signed up for. The first few locations were wonderful: People enjoying a burger or two, some drinks, and then off to the next place, and the next place. But one by one, people began to magically "disappear" and drop out. The next day (or two) for repeat visits yielded even fewer survivors of this absurd culinary exploration, until finally only

one person remained.

29 combined visits and hundreds of miles later, I am sorry to say that this culinary battle has ended in failure: My judges have fled and dropped out, and none of us were able to complete the 33 visits. Oh if only we had a Chestnut or Kobayashi in our group! Sigh... So without further ado, I present to you the incomplete list of results:

(Note: While we all know that food is completely personal and subjective, it's even more obvious here. One person may hate Blue Cheese, while another may not like Garlic. Someone may dislike Avocados or a certain Dressing on their Burger, which all influences what your own personal favorite burger might be. So please take this with a grain of Sea Salt. :)

\* 1st Place (TIE) \*

Rustic Canyon

Located along a quiet stretch of Wilshire, Rustic Canyon has always been at the back of my mind; a place I've heard good things about, but just never get around to going to. But after hearing two strong recommendations for their Burger from Noah and Mr. Meatballs, I realized this was yet another place that needed to be added to this Burger Battle. :)

Currently helmed by Chef Evan Funke, Rustic Canyon represents one of those casual, warm, hidden eateries that just puts out excellent, simple cuisine with Farmers' Market fresh ingredients. Hearing the potential that this might be one of the best Burgers in L.A., I purposely wrangle the biggest [Father's Office](#) groupie I know, to get their impressions along with my other guests. :)

We begin with a Burrata Panzanella (Roasted Tomatoes, Artichokes, Green Olives, Pickled Ramps, Green Garlic).

After all the Burger eating, I can't tell you how happy I am to see something vegetable-based. :) I was merely looking for some respite from all the meat, but instead Chef Funke delivers a refreshing Spring breeze of goodness: The creamy, light Burrata playfully bathes this Farmers' Market Panzanella and you're treated to an invigorating, revitalizing dish of bright, flavorful vegetables that's delicate, fragrant and without reproach. Excellent! :)

And then our Burger arrives:

Meyer Ranch Burger (Sharp Cheddar, Onion Fondue, Bread and Butter Pickles, Herb Remoulade

)Price: \$16

Customizable: Yes

Includes: Hand-Cut French Fries

It looks gorgeous, and then we take a bite: A deep, beefy savoriness comes shining through! Wow. I can't resist the urge to inhale the rest of my Burger. It has such a beautiful bovine essence that isn't as pungent as Dry-Aged Beef (ala [Father's Office](#)). It turns out that Rustic Canyon uses USDA Prime All-Natural Angus Beef from Meyer Ranch, with Beef that is Certified Humanely Raised and Handled, which is a big positive for some.

In addition to the amazing Beef, the Bun tastes strangely familiar to another favorite of mine: Rustic Canyon uses a Rockenwagner Brioche Bun (similar to [The Golden State](#)), which is soft, seemingly delicate, but still holds up pretty well with the juicy Burger. The Sharp Cheddar, Onion Fondue, Pickles and Herb Remoulade all complement the Meyer Ranch Burger, never taking center stage.

It's cooked to medium-rare and is such a revelation that our [Father's Office](#) groupie blurts out, "Oh my gosh! This is the Best Burger in town! I like it more than [Father's Office](#)." :) It's close, but I was in as much shock as my dazed friend. :)

But maybe the planets were aligned perfectly or something, so to make sure, I returned for a 2nd visit to see if the Burger was as amazing as the 1st time I had it.

The Meyer Ranch Burger looks even more amazing this second time.

I eagerly pick up the Burger, and take a big bite: It's as juicy and magnificent as before. Again, it's not the piercing funk of the Dry-Aged [Father's Office](#) Burger, but it stands out in its own genuine beefiness that's more enveloping on the palate. I am simply shocked by how good this Burger is.

The Hand-Cut Fries that come with the Meyer Ranch Burger are crispy, with a soft center, blanched first and then fried. On both visits, the Fries are seasoned just right. But it's their Garlic Aioli Dipping Sauce that deserves special mention. For Garlic lovers out there, it's the most amazing burst of Garlicky Creaminess in a Dipping Sauce. Wonderful! :)

Service has been outstanding on both visits, with our servers being amiable and helpful.

Rustic Canyon meets and exceeds my expectations with their wonderful Burrata Panzanella and the amazing Meyer Ranch Burger. The only negatives for this Burger is that Rustic Canyon is only open for Dinner, they're usually quite busy and crowded, and the \$16 price tag feels a bit steep for some in our group. But otherwise, Chef Funke has delivered a Burger with real beefiness that's less extreme than the [Father's Office](#) Burger, but also more enjoyable. Add in a beautiful, relaxed, casual yet stylish vibe, and Rustic Canyon becomes a destination for one of the best Burgers in L.A.

\*\*\* Rating: 9.0 (out of 10.0) \*\*\*

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