

**GET BEEFED UP** *continued*

Whether you like your burgers medium or prefer them on the rare side, your love for all-things beef is being celebrated on a national scale (and adopted by restaurant chains, who often offer discounts throughout the month). There's no better way to welcome the summer than to bite into a burger and embrace its greasy grandeur. After all, burgers on the grill are synonymous with this time of year.

An immensely popular staple in America's food industry, beef is packed with the stuff you need to keep your body healthy and functional. According to a National Cattlemen's Beef Association statistic, one-third of all Americans have eaten a hamburger or some form of ground beef in the past 24 hours. That makes sense, considering it's a great way to get some of your daily nutrients. Did you know that beef is the number three food source of iron behind fortified cereal and grains? Or that a three-ounce serving of lean beef is an excellent source of B-Complex Vitamins, Phosphorous, Protein and Zinc? That's a lot to chew on!

This summer, while your own buns are getting toasty in the sun, don't forget the burgers. The mouth-watering recipe below comes courtesy of the National Cattlemen's Beef Board.

**Ranch Burgers**

- 1-1/2 lbs lean ground beef
- 2 tsp sweet paprika
- 2 tsp dried thyme leaves, crushed
- 1-1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1/2 tsp ground red pepper
- 6 hamburger buns, split
- 6 leaves Romaine lettuce
- 6 tomato slices
- 1/4 cup prepared light creamy ranch dressing
- 2 Tbsp canned French fried onions

Combine all spices in an airtight container and shake to blend.

Shape ground beef into 6 patties. Press 3/4 teaspoon of the spice mix evenly into both sides of each patty. Store remaining spice mix in airtight container for future use.

Grill to a final internal temperature of 160 degrees F. Line bottom of each bun with lettuce and tomato. Top with burger and spoon ranch dressing evenly over burgers. Sprinkle with French-fried onions and close sandwiches.

Makes 6 servings. Each serving has 440 calories, 26 grams of fat, 25 grams carbohydrate and 25 percent of the daily iron recommendation

— Nicholas Addison Thomas

**HOME GROWN****Gardening In Small Places**

Limited space doesn't mean limited options

**M**any folks think that a garden can only be grown by those lucky enough to have large yards. Not true. Whether you have a mid-sized patio or a tiny apartment balcony, there are creative ways for all of us to reap the benefits of a garden. By using different types of containers, window boxes or hanging baskets, and choosing plants that will thrive in small spaces, you can create your own garden paradise.

Make a wish list. Think of it as a grocery list for your garden. First, you should assess your garden space and determine just how much you have to work with. Can your porch handle a respectable row of lilies? Is there enough room in your small yard for a stretch of tomatoes? Once you've determined how much room you have to play with, write down what you'll need to accomplish your garden goals. You'll want to start with the smaller items that will add some flair to your garden space and then graduate to the bigger items like garden ornaments and other decorative items. By purchasing these outdoor accessories in moderation, you can ensure that you're staying within your financial means.

When it comes to gardening, your only limitation is your imagination. That's especially true when you want to establish gardens in small places. The good news is: You don't need a lot of land to grow fresh vegetables or beautiful flowers. Believe it or not, many vegetables are a perfect fit for container gardening and can adapt to growing in a pot. If you're opting for vegetables instead of flowers, consider planting carrots, radishes, tomatoes



and lettuce. They don't take up a lot of space and they bear fruit throughout much of the summer. If you're looking for something a little more unique, create a one-pot vegetable garden. Simply plant a tomato, cucumber and some parsley in a large container and tend to it periodically. These mix well together and require the same amount of water and sunlight.

When it comes to choosing the right container or pot for your vegetable or flower, you have a variety of options. Make a trip to the shed and see if you can find anything that can double as garden pots, such as pails, wire baskets, wooden boxes, nursery flats, plastic bags and large food cans. If you're feeling especially creative, consider using old milk jugs, coffee cans and cat-litter containers that are cut in half. You don't have

to spend a lot of money at home-improvement stores to find that perfect flower or vegetable pot; simply repurpose what you already have. Just remember to use light-colored containers, because dark ones may absorb too much heat and damage the plants' roots. Whatever container you elect to use, it should have holes at the base to ensure proper water drainage. Also, the size of the container is important. If you're planning on planting eggplants, for example, you should use a five-gallon container per plant.

Trust the seed companies. Every year they release new vegetable plant varieties that are more suitable for growing in small places and containers. When it's time to head out to the store to buy your garden necessities, look for keywords like "bush," "patio," "compact" and "space-saver" on the packet. These types of seeds are specifically bred for container gardening, so you'll know what you're getting when you plant them. When you're shopping for flowers, consider purchasing potted lavender, gardenia or orchids. They're not only beautiful, but they last a long time. If you're looking for flower seeds, check out pansies or dianthus. Pansies can weather the occasional cold front and dianthus will lend an old-fashioned feeling to your garden, what with their pink, red and mauve petals.

No matter the size of your outdoor living space, you can create a garden that rivals the best of them. As you prepare to put some oomph into your outdoor space, remember to stick to the basics. By creating a budget, making a wish list, setting a proper foundation and keeping an eye open for containers and "space-saver" seeds, you will find yourself with a gorgeous garden in no time.

— Nicholas Addison Thomas

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