



## Kentucky Beef Council 2026 Derby Burger Official Rules

The Kentucky Beef Council and the Kentucky Derby Festival are proud to announce the 2026 Derby Burger Contest! The contest will run from November 24, 2025, through January 31, 2026.

Contestants must be 18 years of age or older to submit a hamburger recipe. To be eligible for the contest the hamburger must meet the following guidelines:

- 1) To qualify as a hamburger, the burger must be **100% beef** utilizing Kentucky Cattlemen's Ground Beef, although other ingredients may be added into the patty (spices, vegetables, etc.). **No other meats** may be added into the patty.
- 2) **All burgers must:**
  - a) Be the original creation of the submitter.
  - b) Be composed of a formed ground beef patty utilizing Kentucky Cattlemen's Ground Beef.
  - c) Utilize Dan-O's Seasoning.
- 3) **Burgers may include:**
  - a) Any combination of condiments (such as ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard, etc.)
  - b) Any combination of sauces (such as barbeque, hot sauce, etc.)
  - c) Cheese(s)
  - d) Bun or other bread products (such as biscuits, focaccia, or tortillas).
  - e) Any combination of toppings (such as bacon, onions, tomatoes, lettuce, etc.)
  - f) Any combination of greens (such as lettuce, sprouts, herbs, etc.)
- 4) All components of the hamburger must be placed between the bun or bread pieces or served open-faced on a greens or bread product.
- 5) The recipe should include: 1) Your hamburger name. 2) A list of the specific amount of each ingredient used in standard US measurements. 3) Step-by-step cooking instructions. *All burgers should be cooked to 160° in accordance with safe ground beef cooking guidelines.*
- 6) **A photo of your burger is required for submission.**
- 7) Submitted recipes which do not follow the official contest rules will not be considered.

### Entry Rules

- 1) Original burger recipes should be submitted online at [www.kdf.org/beef](http://www.kdf.org/beef) between November 24, 2025 and January 31, 2026.
- 2) Your submission should include: 1) Your hamburger name, 2) A list of the specific amount of each ingredient used in standard US measurements. 3) Step-by-step cooking instructions including the arrangement of components on the burger. 4) A photo of your burger. **Burger and burger photo must be the original creation of the submitter.**
- 3) By entering the contest all participants consent to the use of their name, photo and/or video, and recipe without further compensation.

SPONSORED BY





- 4) Submitted recipes become the property of the Kentucky Beef Council and the Kentucky Derby Festival.
- 5) Each contestant may enter up to five (5) recipes.

### **Selection of Finalists**

- January 2026: eight (8) submitted hamburger recipes will be selected as finalists by a panel of judges based on the descriptions submitted online.
- February 2026: Top eight (8) submitted hamburger recipes will be selected as finalists by a panel of judges based on the descriptions submitted online.
- February 2026: Each of the eight (8) finalist hamburgers will be promoted on social media along with a dedicated website to allow Kentucky Derby Festival fans to vote for the final four (4) hamburgers.
- March 2026: Top four (4) finalists will be announced.
- March 2026: Final Derby Burger Cook-Off will take place at a Louisville area Kroger store. The winning burger will be selected by the judges at the Derby Burger Cook-Off.

### **Judging Criteria**

- Judging in 2026 will be composed of a series of public voting opportunities, hosted on kdf.org. The voting process will be made up of two rounds: one consisting of the top eight (8) Derby Burger recipes, and one consisting of the top four (4) Derby Burger recipes.

The following guidelines will be used in preliminary judging:

- Creativity
- Ease of preparation
- Burger description and photos - make our judges crave a taste!

### **Prize Package**

One (1) winner, the 2026 Derby Burger Champion, will receive:

- One 2026 Kentucky Derby Festival Poster
- \$100 gift certificate to Kroger
- Your Derby Burger recipe featured inside Louisville area Kroger stores, including recipe ingredients and recipe card.
- A grilling prize pack from the Kentucky Beef Council, including a grill!
- A prize package from Dan-O's Seasoning
- A Kentucky Derby Festival ticket package including the following tickets: (2) tickets to the Thunder Over Louisville VIP Party, (2) VIP tickets to BourbonVille
- Your recipe will be promoted on Kentucky Derby Festival and Kentucky Beef Council websites and social media channels.

Top three (3) finalists will each receive:

- Kentucky Beef Council prize package
- One 2026 Kentucky Derby Festival Poster

SPONSORED BY

