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Upscale Burgers in Downtown Newark

Burg, from chef Chris Siversen, will bring casual fare to renovated Military Park.

By Suzanne Zimmer Lowery | July 6, 2015



The new 5-ounce Burg Burger will be a smaller, lower-priced version of Maritime Parc's MP Burger, above, but made from the same grind.

On Wednesday, July 29, the long-awaited opening of Burg—an indoor/outdoor café in Newark's Military Park—will complete the \$3.2 million renovation of the 6-acre area across the street from NJPAC.

Chris Siversen, chef/owner of Maritime Parc in Jersey City's Liberty State Park, developed Burg as a friendly, casual place: "The kind of place I want to go hang-out," he says. "Gimme a burger and a beer, and I'm happy."



Chris Siversen, executive chef of Maritime Parc in Jersey City and the new Burg in Newark's Military Park.

Maritime Parc, one of NJM's Top 25 restaurants, will bring its quality and hipness to Burg, but the new restaurant will be small and popularly priced. Its burgers, all 5-ounces each, will range in price from \$8.50 to \$12. Burg will have 40 seats at tables and counters indoors and 50 seats outdoors in warm weather.

The menu will include 10 different burgers, including Siversen's favorite—a "Korean" burger topped with Korean kimchi cabbage relish, spicy mayonnaise and a fried egg, served with a cucumber-sesame slaw.

All burgers will be made from the same blend of chuck, short rib and brisket with a bit of dry-aged beef that Siversen uses for his 8-ounce MP Burger at Maritime Parc.

There was just one catch. The Nebraska-based meat supplier that Siversen has long used for his MP burger was fading away, and he had to find a new supplier to duplicate the original grind.

He turned to DeBragga in Jersey City. To create the Burg burger and at the same time recreate the MP Burger, Siversen says he and his butcher at DeBragga tinkered with the ratio for a long time.

"But when we hit that combination, we said, 'That is the home-run,'" the chef says. "I actually think it's better. It has the funkiness of the dry-aged beef, the tenderness and mouth feel of the short rib and brisket."

The patties will be gently formed with equipment that doesn't compress them, so they remain juicy during cooking and have "better texture," Siversen says. They will be cooked on griddles, above which a hot metal plate drops down to sear the top at the same time the griddle sears the bottom.

"It immediately seals all the moisture in and cooks the burgers in half the time it normally would, so there's hardly any shrinkage," Siversen says.

Military Park, created in 1667, got its name because it was first used as a colonial military training ground. Over time, what was once the town commons became run-down, dirty and dangerous.

Then developer Daniel Biederman, who had revitalized Manhattan's Bryant Park 20 years ago, was brought in to revitalize Military Park. That part of the project began in 2013. The renovated park reopened in June of 2014.

Biederman's plan included reconstructing the unattractive, bunker-like entrances to the parking garage beneath the park and cleaning the massive statue entitled "Wars of America," erected in 1926 by the creator of Mount Rushmore. It includes sculptures of 42 people and two horses.

Another part of the project was to make the area a casual meeting place for food and drink. Additional items on Burg's limited menu include chicken, tuna and veggie burgers, salads, fries, a grilled cheese sandwich, soft serve ice cream and Siversen's signature almond- and ricotta-filled donuts.

"It's been a long time coming," Siversen says of the Burg project. Soon it will be a reality: "a fun, energetic little spot in a beautiful park. We're the last piece of the puzzle. Once we're open, it's 100 percent complete."