

It's amazing, considering the recent round-the-clock coverage and practically Talmudic scrutiny of our local burger scene, that one of the best new specimens has virtually eluded the burger-nerd radar. It is the big-flavored, dry-aged eight-ounce cheeseburger Ryan Skeen has put on the menu at [Church Street Tavern](#), where he recently took over the kitchen.

Those up on the Underground Gourmet burger archives will remember Skeen as the creator of one of the U.G.'s all-time favorites — the oddball genius concoction that he, like a one-man Pat LaFrieda Meat Purveyors, Inc., ground in-house at [Resto](#) several years ago from a combo of beef cheek, hanger steak, and pork fatback. You might also know Skeen as a talented, classically trained [albeit peripatetic chef](#), one who, though he might rightly consider his calling as being above the patty-flipping fray, can cook burgers in cast-iron pans the way that, say, Yo-Yo Ma can play bluegrass on cellos.

Now, at Church Street, Skeen has moved into the dry-aged-beef camp and the result is predictably mind-blowing. The menu somewhat modestly describes this estimable thing as a tavern burger: “dry-aged house blend, Vermont cheddar, bacon-onion relish, fries, \$19.” What it fails to note is that the blend includes not only strip and rib-eye trimmings, as well as whole muscle from sides of Wagyu that Skeen gets from a Vermont farm co-op, but also beef heart for a soupçon of added gamey funk.

But the beef is not all. Like all great burgers, this is an ensemble piece. Given a crusty sear in a hot pan, the loosely packed pucks are minimally glazed with the cheese. A judicious dose of housemade bacon-onion chutney cut with malt vinegar only highlights the richness of the meat. And a Grandaisy brioche bun has enough of a squish factor to satisfy the Martin's Potato Rolls contingent. Even a smattering of arugula doesn't detract.

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BURGERS

One of NYC's Best New Burgers Is at Church Street Tavern — and Practically No One Knows It

By Rob Patronite and Robin Raisfeld

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