

# Robb Report

## Four Chefs Fuse Burgers and Manhattans at Our Request

### Richie Biondo, 5 Napkin Burger



Tony Sachs

Richie Biondo, the head chef at the Hell's Kitchen branch of beef-and-booze palace **5 Napkin Burger**, has an interesting focus for his Manhattan Burger: the cherry. It may be a mere garnish, but it's an important component in a well-made Manhattan. He also chose to leave the beef alone, using the other ingredients to transform his burger into a Manhattan Burger. "We do have a cider and bourbon-braised bacon on our menu," Biondo says, while prepping the kitchen. "So I took that idea and braised the bacon in vermouth, cherry bitters, cherry pulp, dried cherries, and cider vinegar." The bacon he uses, from Pat LaFrieda, is a double-thick slab that's closer to pork belly; it stays melt-in-your-mouth tender rather than crisping.



"The rest was easy," he says. "I already had an idea for barbecuing the onions; I just had to incorporate some of the bourbon into it." Once the onions are "sweated out," losing much of their own moisture as they're cooked, he adds a mix of bourbon, cider vinegar, mustard, and spices until they're tender and caramelized. Biondo uses Woodford Reserve bourbon both in the burger and in the Manhattan he pairs it with.

The glaze on the bacon, combined with the barbecued onions, negates the need for condiments. The thick, weighty patty gets cooked to medium-rare: "We sear it, get a nice crust on top, and we turn it every 2 to 2 1/2 minutes. I like it medium rare; I like a little juice in it." The finished product, topped with sharp cheddar ("It's a matter of taste," he explains), is nestled in a soft house-made potato roll that soaks up the juices without falling apart or stealing the spotlight from the other ingredients. It's a behemoth of a burger, messy enough to earn five napkins and then some, but well worth the jaw-straining effort it'll take to get your mouth around it.

Of the four Manhattan Burgers I tried, this is the one that's most straightforwardly reminiscent of the cocktail. The rich, tangy notes of the drink are perfectly captured in the burger, and sipping while eating only accentuates the caramel, cherry, and spicy notes of both. ([Snapkinburger.com](http://Snapkinburger.com))

#### To make the burger:

Slice the slab bacon (see below) the long way, into 1/2-inch thick slices. Sear a ground-beef patty and cook until desired degree of doneness. When the burger is almost finished cooking, sear the bacon. Top the beef patty with cheddar cheese and place under the broiler to melt. Baste the bacon with the bitters glaze (see below). Assemble the burger, topping the beef patty with onions (see below) and glazed bacon.

#### Slab Bacon and Bitters Glaze

Ingredients:

4 to 5 lbs. of slab bacon (rind on)

1 1/2 cups sweet vermouth

3 Tbsp. Fee Brothers cherry bitters

1/2 cup Cherry Coke

2 Tbsp. cider vinegar

1 cup dried cherries

2 Tbsp. brown sugar

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Combine the vermouth, bitters, Coke, and vinegar. Place the bacon in a hotel pan and pour the liquid mixture over the top. Cover with aluminum foil and braise for 2 hours. Remove the bacon from the pan and let cool on a rack, reserving the liquid in a saucepan and skimming any fat off the top. Add the cherries to the liquid, heat to a boil, then remove from heat and let sit until cool. Blend the liquid with the cherries until smooth, add the brown sugar, and strain back into a saucepan. Simmer until it thickens to the consistency of ketchup.

#### Onions

Ingredients:

10 oz. Spanish onions, sliced thin

1/2 oz. butter

1/4 tsp. salt

2 tsp. Dijon mustard

1/2 Tbsp. cider vinegar

1 Tbsp. BBQ spice

1/3 cup bourbon

Preparation:

Sweat the onions in butter and salt slowly for 8 minutes. Add the cider vinegar, bourbon, and BBQ spice; cook slowly for 16 minutes (make sure not to burn). The onions should be tender.

