Trivia database KGB Answers states that 13 billion hamburgers are consumed worldwide every year. That’s 35,616,438 burgers eaten each day. As people around the globe munch on savory ground beef and their preferred toppings and condiments, many people have wondered just why a hamburger is called a hamburger. After all, there is no ham in it.

A hamburger is a cooked ground patty, typically made out of beef, though different meats have been substituted in recent years. Still, most people will not find ground ham in their hamburger.

The name “hamburger” comes from where the first hamburger was created. The hamburger originated in Hamburg, Germany. Historians surmise it was based on minced beef specialties that first appeared around different regions of Europe as early as the 15th century.

Germans devised a dish called the Hamburg steak. It consisted of a simply flavored, shredded, low-grade beef with regional spices. The dish was eaten both raw and cooked. As Germans began to emigrate to America, restauranteurs and street vendors in New York City and other popular port cities began offering a beef dish cooked in the “Hamburg style,” to attract German patrons.

Eventually, the beef of the Hamburg steak was served between buns to make it more portable, most notably at county fairs across America.

Different people are credited with creating the first official hamburger, including Frank and Charles Menches, who were vendors at the Erie County Fair in New York. The vendors reportedly used beef for sandwiches when they ran out of sausage.

Others credit Charlie Nagreen, known as “Hamburger Charlie,” with the invention of the hamburger. He made sandwiches out of meatballs that he was selling at the 1885 Seymour, Wis. Fair, so customers could eat them while walking. The Seymour Community Historical Society said 15-year-old Nagreen named the dish a “hamburger” after the Hamburg steak.

There are other reports attributing the hamburger’s invention to other people, so the history remains fuzzy with respect to this popular food.

Regardless of where, when and by whom it was invented, the hamburger has maintained its popularity into the 21st century.

What’s a hamburger without ketchup?

On the flip side, hamburgers seem naked without ketchup, which remains one of the most popular condiments for hamburgers and french fries. Nearly every American household has a bottle of ketchup stashed in its cupboard or refrigerator.

The origins of ketchup can be traced back to the 1600s when many cultures used pickling brine as dipping sauces for foods. Affluent classes in Great Britain used rich brines from pickled walnuts and mushrooms and referred to them as catsup. Any sauce made with a vinegar base was known as catsup or ketchup.

Americans eventually began experimenting with catsup recipes, targeting the country’s taste for sweet foods. In the mid-19th century, the tomato-based variety that is popular today was created.

The name ketchup is often traced back to Malaysian and Chinese cultures who were the first to use a tart, briny condiment they called “kichap” or “ke-tsiap” or “ketjap.”

Holyoke Enterprise November 15, 2012