

# Meatless Meat

A diet that is mostly ultra-processed food may raise the risk of certain diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. This association between diet and heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic illnesses is also observed with red meat consumption and even more so with processed red meat. Here is a guide to making better choices with burgers, one of the most popular meat items in the US. 50 billion burgers are consumed each year!

New meatless or plant-based burgers are designed to look, taste, and smell like regular meat. Companies purposely add fake heme that's typically found in real meat to make the meat look "bloody" when it's being cooked. While these seem like miracle food, one look at the nutrition facts panel shows they are high in saturated fat and sodium.

Unlike traditional veggie burgers made of soy, mushrooms, or other vegetables, these newer plant-based burgers include a variety of processed ingredients. Plant-based burgers provide about 20 grams of protein in a 4 oz. patty, similar to a beef patty. Iron and B vitamin contents are also similar as are calories. Because of the addition of coconut oil, the saturated fat is fairly similar as well. If they're supposed to be healthier, why not use less saturated fat? Some veggie burgers have almost a half-day's supply of saturated fat! While these burgers may be meatless, they are still ultra-processed.

These types of burgers contain very few whole foods compared to bean or other plant-based options. Some also contain added sugar; something consumers certainly don't need more of. If you add a slice of cheese or side of fries to these non-meat burgers, they can hardly be considered healthy food.

## Mushroom Burger

This recipe is a homage to my favorite restaurant, Greens, in San Francisco. They offer a vegetarian menu that is so delightful you do not have to be vegetarian to enjoy it. This burger is made with portabella mushrooms and roasted veggies.

Ingredients:

1 portabella mushroom burger, rinsed and stem cut off  
1 whole-wheat bun

1 cup of lettuce like arugula or kale

Roasted veggies: onion rings, tomato slices, eggplant

Ketchup

Salad dressing

Olive oil spray

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.

Meanwhile, lightly spray a non-stick baking tray with olive oil or vegetable oil spray.

Place the portabella mushroom on the tray, then add the onion rings, sliced tomatoes, and sliced eggplant.

Roast all of the veggies for 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes.

Make a delicious veggie burger by layering all of the veggies with ketchup and salad dressing.

Serves 1. Each 1 burger serving: 193 calories, 2g fat, 1g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 0mg cholesterol, 228mg sodium, 37g carbohydrate, 7g fiber, 11g sugars, 9g protein.