

Bypass the Beef: Give Veggie Burgers a Try

Burgers have been a mainstay of casual American cuisine for decades, but along with that meaty flavor, you usually get a pretty hefty dose of saturated fat. Saturated fats, found primarily in animal products, are known to raise blood cholesterol levels, which in turn increases your risk of developing heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 7 percent of your daily calories come from saturated fats. For someone following a 2,000-calorie daily diet, that's about 16 grams. A typical fast food cheeseburger contains 6 grams, while a double cheeseburger has 11. Veggie burgers typically contain little to no saturated fat because they are bean-, grain-, and veggie-based—no meat.

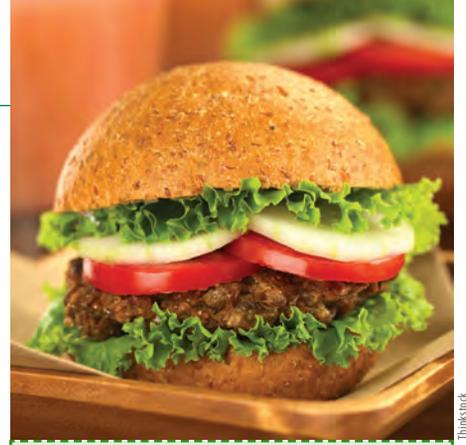
Pick the best burger. Many people believe that because a food is vegetarian, it's automatically a healthy food, but that's not always the case. You still need to check the ingredients and the Nutrition Facts panel to ensure you're choosing a healthy burger.

First, look at the calories. According to Rachel Combe, MS, RD, CDN, a dietitian at Weill Cornell Medical Center, "Calories usually range from about 70-170 calories per serving, with the average being around 120 calories." Total fat content is next: Aim for a burger with roughly 5 grams of fat or less. You will find burgers that have a higher total fat content but are still healthy choices—if the fat comes

from seeds or nuts, which are rich in unsaturated fats. Check the ingredients list to ensure the fat comes from healthy sources like these instead of other added fats. Finally, as with any processed food, consider the sodium. Be sure to choose burgers with no more than about 350 milligrams (mg) of sodium.

What's inside? On many veggie burger boxes, you'll see the initials "TVP" or "TSP" in the ingredient list—these stand for "texturized vegetable protein" and "texturized soy protein." TVP and TSP are high-protein, low-fat meat replacements made from soy flour. Another term you may find in your veggie burger ingredients list is disodium guanylate. It's a common flavor enhancer and is often used with MSG (monosodium glutamate). Combe says, "You may want to avoid products with this ingredient if you suffer from symptoms associated with MSG intake (for example, headaches, rapid heart rate, anxiety) or if you have blood pressure, kidney or heart failure problems, chronic conditions that normally require a low-sodium diet."

Do it yourself. It's not difficult to make your own veggie burgers. Without much effort, you can make burgers that don't contain artificial flavors or preservatives, and you can control the seasonings and experiment with different flavors. 🍴



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BLACK BEAN VEGGIE BURGERS

- 1 (16-ounce) can black beans, drained, rinsed, and blotted dry
- ½ c red bell pepper, coarsely chopped
- ½ c onion, coarsely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 eggs
- 1 Tbs chili powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp Thai chili sauce or hot sauce (optional)
- 1 c regular oats

1. In a medium bowl, mash black beans with a fork until thick and pasty.
2. In a food processor, finely chop pepper, onion, and garlic. Drain excess liquid; stir into mashed beans.
3. In a small bowl, combine eggs, chili powder, cumin, and chili sauce. Stir the egg mixture into the mashed beans. Mix in oats until the mixture is sticky and holds together.
4. Divide mixture into six patties. Wrap individually and refrigerate; patties can be stored in the freezer for up to three months.
5. Burgers can be cooked on the grill over high heat (8 minutes per side), baked in a 375-degree oven (10 minutes per side), or cooked in a skillet over medium-high heat (8 minutes per side).

Yield: 6 patties

Nutrition information per patty: 135 calories, 8 g protein, 6 g fiber, 3 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 23 g carbohydrate, 223 mg sodium

SUPERMARKET SLEUTH: TOP 10 VEGGIE BURGERS	SERVING (OZ)	CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT/SAT FAT	CARB	SODIUM	FIBER
1. Boca All-American Cheeseburger	2.5	100	13	4.5/1.5	6	320	4
2. Boca All-American Original Vegan	2.5	70	13	0.5/0	6	280	4
3. Boca All-American Grilled Vegetable	2.5	80	12	1/0	7	300	4
4. MorningStar Farms Grillers Vegan Veggie Burgers	2.5	100	12	2.5/0	7	280	4
5. Amy's Texas Veggie Burger	2.5	140	12	2.5/0	16	350	4
6. Dr. Praeger's Italian Veggie Burgers	2.75	110	6	5/<0.5	13	250	5
7. Dr. Praeger's Tex Mex Veggie Burgers	2.75	110	6	4.5/<0.5	13	250	5
8. Amy's Light in Sodium California Veggie Burger	2.5	110	5	4/0	16	250	3
9. Dr. Praeger's Bombay Veggie Burgers	2.75	110	5	5/0	13	250	4
10. Dr. Praeger's California Veggie Burgers	2.75	110	5	5/0	13	250	4

Note: Sorted in descending order of protein; oz = ounces, g = grams, mg = milligrams, Sat Fat = saturated fat; Carb = carbohydrates.

Nutritional Information from manufacturer label and website.

Top 10 List (based on supermarket survey of popular brands, but may not include all brands available); At or above 5 grams of protein and 3 grams of fiber, and at or below 12 grams of fat and 350 mg of sodium per serving.