

The Versatile Veggie Burger

Home-made veggie (or ‘vegetarian’) burgers are a delicious and nutritious alternative to the traditional hamburger. Making veggie burgers instead of beef hamburgers is an easy way to eat less calories, fat, and cholesterol, while including more lean protein, extra fiber, vitamins and minerals into your diet. The American Cancer Society recommends cutting down on red meats (hamburgers, hot dogs, and deli meats) to reduce the risk of developing certain cancers. Eating lean, vegetarian sources of protein instead of red meat may also lower your risk of developing chronic diseases like obesity and heart disease. It is easy and inexpensive to make veggie burgers at home, and you can find frozen veggie burgers at just about any supermarket, even WalMart! See next page for the top-rated and healthiest store-bought veggie burger brands.

The best thing about making your own veggie burgers is that they can be made with just about anything you might have in the kitchen, with low-cost ingredients that are full of fiber and protein. Examples include using canned or dried beans like black beans, pinto beans, red or white beans and lentils; grains like brown rice, oatmeal, or flour and bread crumbs; frozen and canned vegetables like carrots, potatoes, onions, and peppers, and chopped nuts and sunflower seeds. You can make it mild or spicy, according to your taste. If you don’t have all of the ingredients in the recipes below, try substituting the missing item with another one listed above! **Veggie Burgers can be baked, grilled, or sautéed** in a fry pan on the stove, and eaten on a bun, in a pita, or between slices of bread with lettuce, tomato, ketchup and mustard, just like regular hamburgers! Veggie burgers are also great topped with hummus or salsa, eaten with rice, or crumbled on a salad.

Money & Time Saving Tip: Make a large batch of veggie burgers to freeze and cook later—Just put the uncooked burgers on a baking sheet or pan lined with wax paper, and freeze for 30 minutes to an hour. Once frozen, place burgers in a large plastic freezer bag, or wrap in foil, and freeze again. When ready to use, remove from freezer and thaw them on the counter for 30 minutes, and then cook as usual!

Easy Red Bean & Carrot Burger

Serves 4

[Adapted from womenshealthmag.com](http://womenshealthmag.com)

1½ cups canned no-salt added black beans, rinsed and drained
¼ cup celery, chopped
½ cup onion, roughly chopped

¾ cup shredded or 1 cup diced carrot
1 cup dry quick-cooking oats
2½ tsp canola or vegetable oil
½ tsp cumin or favorite spice

Directions: Put all ingredients in a food processor and pulse until combined, 2 to 3 minutes. Form into 4 patties. Burgers can be grilled, sautéed, or baked. **To grill:** spray a piece of aluminum foil with cooking spray and place foil on the grill. Cook patties on foil for 5 minutes, flip, then cook 5 minutes more. **To bake:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or spray with cooking spray. Bake for 15 minutes, then use a spatula to carefully flip burgers (if they fall apart, press them back together) and bake for 5 minutes more, until lightly browned.

Nutrition Facts per serving: Calories 200, Fat 5 gm, Sodium 30 mg, Carbs 31 gm, Fiber 8 gm, Protein 9 gm

Rice and Lentil Burger

Serves 6

[Adapted from engine2diet.com](http://engine2diet.com)

3½ cups water
½ cup dried green or brown lentils, or 1 (15 oz) can, rinsed and drained.
1 cup brown rice
2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 medium onion, chopped
2 medium red, yellow, or orange bell peppers, diced
1 tsp salt
1 tsp chili powder, or a dash of hot sauce (optional)
¼ cup whole-wheat or white flour

Directions: *For dry lentils:* In a medium saucepan, bring 1½ cups of water to a boil. Add the lentils, reduce the heat, and cook until softened, about 15 minutes. Drain and set aside. In another medium saucepan bring 2 cups of water to a boil, add the rice, reduce the heat, cover, and simmer until the rice is just tender, about 40 minutes. Drain and set aside. In a frying pan, sauté the garlic, onion, and peppers until lightly browned. Combine the lentils, rice, and vegetables in a large bowl. Add the salt and chili powder and mix well. If needed, add flour to hold the mixture together if it feels too wet. Form into 6 patties and place on a parchment lined or sprayed baking sheet. Preheat oven to 350°F and bake burgers until slightly firm, about 15 minutes.

Nutrition Facts per serving: Calories 200, Fat 2 gm, Sodium 410 mg, Carbs 42 gm, Fiber 5 gm, Protein 7 gm

Easy Chickpea Garden Burger

Serves 4

[Adapted from vrg.org](http://vrg.org)

1 (15 oz) can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
1 stalk celery, finely chopped
¼ small onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, grated or finely chopped

¼ cup whole wheat or other flour
2 tsp cooking oil
¼ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions: Coarsely mash garbanzo beans (also called “chickpeas”) with a fork or masher. Add remaining ingredients except oil and mix well in a bowl. Form into 4 patties. Meanwhile, heat oil in large skillet and cook over medium heat until brown. Flip over and brown other side. Serve on a lightly toasted bun with your favorite toppings.

Nutrition Facts per serving: *Calories 170, Fat 4 gm, Sodium 50 mg, Carbs 27 gm, Fiber 6 gm, Protein 7 gm*

White Bean & Sweet Potato Burger

Serves 6

[Adapted from sheknows.com](http://sheknows.com)

1 (15 oz) can no-salt added cannellini beans (white beans), drained and rinsed
1 large sweet potato, cooked and cool to the touch
1 cup diced mushrooms
3 Tbsp mustard

¾ cup unsalted bread crumbs (look for whole wheat)
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp ground black pepper
¼ tsp red pepper flakes or dash of hot sauce (optional)

Directions: Preheat oven to 375° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, or spray with oil and set it aside. Add the beans to a large bowl. Slice the cooked sweet potato in half, scoop out the flesh, and add it to the bowl with the beans. Mash together the beans and sweet potato until almost smooth with a fork or potato masher. It is okay if it is slightly lumpy! Add the diced mushrooms and mustard, and mix to combine. Next, add the bread crumbs, salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes, if using. Use a spoon to combine the mixture. If mixture seems too wet, add in an extra ¼ cup more bread crumbs and stir well. Shape the mixture into 6 patties about one inch thick. Place the patties on the baking sheet, and bake for 30 minutes, flipping the patties halfway through the cooking time.

Nutrition Facts per serving: *Calories 110, Fat 1 gm, Sodium 410 mg, Carbs 22 gm, Fiber 4 gm, Protein 5 gm*

Choosing the Best Veggie Burger at the Supermarket

Buying frozen veggie burgers can be part of an easy and fast meatless meal—they often can be cooked and ready to eat in 5 minutes. In the frozen aisle at the supermarket you will usually find 2 different types of veggie burgers—the ones meant to taste like beef burgers, with a darker color, grill flavor, and chewy texture. These are usually made from soy products, like soy protein isolate, soy protein concentrate, textured soy protein, or textured soy flour. The other type of veggie burger is not meant to taste like meat, and is made mostly of beans, grains, seeds, and vegetables. Most store-bought veggie burgers are lower in calories and fat than beef and turkey burgers and higher in fiber.

Look at the nutrition label to find brands with less than 20% daily value of sodium and **at least 5 grams of protein**. The brands below have been rated as the best tasting burgers; all have at least 5 grams of protein and under 400 mg sodium.

Best Bean Burger: MorningStar Farms Spicy Black Bean Veggie Burger

“Whole roasted corn, juicy black beans and fresh-tasting diced tomatoes make this winner stand out from the pack. Mild green chiles give the Southwestern-inspired burger just enough heat” (usually \$4.29 for a box of 4) **Nutrition Facts:** *Calories 110, Sodium 350 mg, Protein 11 gm* Sourced from rachelraymag.com and Nutrition Action Healthletter

Best Fake Meat Burger: MorningStar Farms Garden Veggie Burger

“Mushrooms, water chestnuts, onions, carrots, bell peppers, and olives give these guys their great vegetable flavor.” These have a fake meat flavor and juicy texture and brown well. **Nutrition Facts:** *Calories 110, Sodium 350 mg, Protein 10 gm*
Sourced from seriouseats.com and Nutrition Action Healthletter

Best Vegan Vegetable Burger: Dr. Praeger’s California Veggie Burgers

These are burgers “where you recognize all the ingredients.” Made with lots of vegetables, these are not meant to taste like a hamburger. **Nutrition Facts:** *Calories 110, Sodium 290 mg, Protein 5 gm*
Sourced from nomeatathlete.com and Nutrition Action Healthletter

For more resources on vegetarian cooking check out: vrg.org, meatlessmonday.com, & nutritionaction.com