



[Related: Try These Quick Plant-Based Dinner Recipes](#)

## What Is Plant-Based Meat?

---

Just as there has been a lot of debate over what we call milk (hello, [oat beverage](#)), there are a lot of discussions (and [even some court battles](#)) over what we define as meat. "There is no true definition of plant-based meat," says the [Institute of Culinary Education's \(ICE\) Director of Nutrition, Celine Beitchman](#). "It's up to the person making it to call it what they want and I think as long as they're honest and consumers are able to look clearly at the product and understand what they purchasing and eating that's fine." Simply put, plant-based meats are foods made from plants to resemble animal-based meat. "I think of it as using plants to mimic the taste, feel, and texture of meat," says Adrienne Bitar, a [historian at Cornell University](#) specializing in food and health and who is currently working on a book about alternative proteins and meat substitutes. "It's not your traditional vegetarian bean burger that isn't trying to fool anyone."

Plant-based meats are available in a range of options, from burger patties and sausages to nuggets and deli meats and more. And those options are made with a variety of different ingredients to mimic conventional meat. For instance, [Beyond Meat](#) uses pea plant protein, beet juice, and dyes, while the [Impossible Burger](#) contains a genetically engineered "heme," or soy leghemoglobin, that makes the burger appear to bleed. Grains and legumes tend to be the common ingredients in many plant-based meats.

## What About Lab-Based Meat?

---

Plant-based meat is not the same as lab-based meat, also known as cultured meat, which is meat grown in a lab by first taking a biopsy from an animal's muscle tissue. You can't buy that meat in U.S. supermarkets yet, although lab-grown chicken nuggets were approved for sale in [Singapore in late 2020](#).

## What Type of Plant-Based Meats Can I Buy?

---

Right now, the most common types of plant-based meats are burger patties, chicken nuggets, meatballs, and sausages, but several companies are working on making whole-muscle meat products [such as steak](#).

## Is It Healthier for Me and the Planet?

---

Experts agree that eating less meat is better for us and the planet, but that doesn't necessarily mean plant-based meats are healthier than their animal-based ones. "I like to look at the [whole diet](#)," says Beitchman. "If you're having a craving for meat but want less animal products in your diet there's nothing wrong with a plant-based burger but I wouldn't recommend eating it everyday." As with everything else, it's essential to read the labels of the plant-based meats you're buying. According to Beitchman, you should keep an eye on the

sodium content and how many additives there are. And you want to consider your personal health risks and health goals. "If we're thinking not just about health but also safety there's a big advantage as they avoid the use of antibiotics," says Bitar, adding that the way plant-based meats are created is generally safer for workers than traditional meat processing plants, which have a long history of problematic working conditions.

When it comes to the environment, data is murky around how much better plant-based meats actually are for the planet. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported that if more people switched to a plant-based diet, it could reduce greenhouse gases. On the whole, most plant-based meats appear to use less natural resources such as water and land and produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions than conventional meat. Still, there are questions about how much better certain ingredients are, such as the genetically modified soybeans used in some plant-based products. "I think that it's possible they overuse certain ingredients and when you put them up against the regenerative agriculture movement or look at the carbon footprint as part of a food system issue plant based meats are beneficial but not really moving us in the direction we need to go," says Beitchman.

## **Are Plant-Based Meats Just a Trend?**

---

Only time will tell, but it's important to remember that the current interest in plant-based meat is not the start of the story. In the 1890s, John Harvey Kellogg (yes, of that Kellogg family, the ones who make breakfast cereals) created a product called Nuttose from peanuts that was designed to mimic a traditional roast. According to Bitar, Kellogg's inspiration for creating the product was to make a safer and cheaper alternative for meat. During WWI and WWII, eating less meat was pitched as patriotic thing to do to save resources needed for the war. "I think we'll see something similar today but for the environment," says Bitar. "I'm optimistic that plant-based meats will have real staying power."

According to one recent Yale University study, 94 percent of Americans say they are willing to eat more plant-based food.

## **How Should I Cook with Plant-Based Meats?**

---

If you plan to start cooking plant-based meats at home, know that you'll prepare them pretty much exactly like you would regular meat. After all, plant-based meat is designed to mimic traditional meat in every way, including cooking, so you can add those meatballs to your pasta, throw the patties on the grill, and top the pizza with plant-based pepperoni.

## **Popular in Vegetarian Recipes**

---

•

**Japanese Sweets-and-Leeks Mash**

•

**Whole Roasted Maitake Steaks with Japanese Sweets-and-Leeks Mash**

•

**Tagliatelle with Porcini Butter Sauce**

•

**Red Onions Stuffed with Parsley Breadcrumbs**

•

**Green Beans with Tomatoes and Crispy Breadcrumbs**



•

**Ravioli with Roasted Eggplant, Tomatoes, and Capers**

- 

**Cauliflower-and-Chickpea Pitas with Creamy Yogurt Sauce**

- **Grilled Vegetable Pizzas**

- 

**Vegetarian BLT with Roasted Shiitake Mushrooms**

- **Brussels-Sprout Tacos**

•

**Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Honey-Chipotle Glaze**

•

**Roasted Broccoli with Seeds and Feta**

•

**Broccoli, Lemon, and Gouda Pizzas**

- 

### **Brown-Butter Sweet-Potato Gnocchi with Seeds**

- **Cocktail Salad Dressing**
- **Tomato-Eggplant Gnocchi**



---

## **Comments**

---

Be the first to comment!

Advertisement

