

Meat Analogue Facts

Meat Analogs

Meat analogs are non-meat foods produced to stimulate various kinds of meats. They are made by combining soy protein with various other ingredients. In 1922, meat analogs were first introduced in America when a product called Soy Bean Meat was produced in Tennessee. In order to provide meat substitutes for its largely vegetarian membership, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was instrumental in the early development of new meat analogs.

Today, there are literally hundreds of different products that fall into this category. Though they are made from a variety of ingredients, most use soy protein; some are made from tofu.

Some meat analogs are designed to taste like beef, pork, chicken, or even tuna fish. Some are made into products such as imitation hot dogs, deli meats, and burgers. Others, including some meat analog burgers found on the market, are intended to be used in place of meat, but don't necessarily look or taste like it.

Buying & Storing Meat & Dairy Analogs

Meat analogs are sold as frozen, canned, or dried foods. The frozen and canned foods are often completely prepared. They generally require the addition of water and sometimes other ingredients, and they require cooking.

Some meat analogs are available in regular grocery stores. They may be sold in the frozen foods section, with the specialty food items, or in the meat section. For example, tofu hot dogs might be found near regular hot dogs.

Natural food stores and food cooperatives usually have an extensive selection of meat analogs.

Store meat analogs according to package directions.

Using Meat & Dairy Analogs

Meat analogs can normally be used the same way as the foods they replace. For example, tofu hot dogs or soy burgers can be cooked on the grill and served on buns with catsup and relish. Soy-based cold cuts can be used in deli-type sandwiches. Imitation sausage and bacon products are cooked and served in the same way as their meat-based counterparts.

Meat analogs can be cut up and added to stir-fried dishes, soups, or stews. They can be substituted for meat in nearly any recipe, or simply add them to a recipe along with the meat.

Nutritional Value

With so many different meat analogs available to consumers, the nutritional value of these foods varies considerably.

Generally they are lower in fat than the foods they replace, though meat analogs themselves vary greatly in fat content. With increasing consumer demand for low-fat products, a number of light or low-fat soy meat analogs are appearing on the market. For example, consumers can buy non-fat hog dogs or low-fat sausages.

Most meat analogs made from soybeans are excellent sources of protein, iron, and B-vitamins. Meat analogs are sometimes fortified with other nutrients, such as vitamin B-12.

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