# Impossible Burger: This plant-based burger looks and tastes like real beef, but is there a catch?

The [Impossible Burger](https://www.cnet.com/news/impossible-burger-everything-you-need-to-know/) is a vegetarian burger that has a pink color, juicy dribbles, smoky flavor and a charred crust. Oh, and this meatless patty [even bleeds like beef](https://www.cnet.com/news/impossible-burger-2-0-tastes-like-beef-really/).

The Impossible Burger has gotten so popular that [national restaurant chains have added it to their menus](https://www.cnet.com/news/where-to-buy-the-impossible-burger-2-0-fast-food-and-chain-restaurants/).

**What ingredients are in the Impossible Burger?**

The protein in an Impossible Burger isn't animal flesh; rather, it's a blend of soy and potato proteins. The juicy sizzle when an Impossible Burger hits the pan or grill comes from coconut oil and sunflower oil, the burger's fat sources. To hold everything together, Impossible Foods uses methylcellulose, a bulk-forming binder that also serves as a great source of fiber.



As for flavor, well, this is where things get interesting. Impossible Foods uses heme as the main flavor compound in its burger. Heme is an iron-containing compound found in all living organisms. Plants, animals, bacteria, fungi... if it's alive, it contains heme.

In animals, heme is an important part of the protein hemoglobin, which carries oxygen throughout your body via blood. Know how your mouth tastes metallic when you accidentally bite your lip? That's heme.

In plants, heme still carries oxygen, just not through blood. The Impossible Burger contains heme from the roots of soy plants, in the form of a molecule called leghemoglobin. Food scientists insert DNA from soy roots into a genetically modified yeast, where it ferments and produces large quantities of soy heme.

**What does the Impossible Burger taste like?**

The short answer: The Impossible Burger tastes like beef. It tastes, smells and feels like real beef.

For [vegetarians, vegans and probably the average omnivore](https://www.cnet.com/news/impossible-burger-will-be-sold-at-burger-king-nationwide-this-year/), the Impossible Burger is an incredibly similar substitute for beef. For beef connoisseurs and picky eaters, Impossible is getting close, but may still have some work to do.

**Is the Impossible Burger healthier than beef?**

As far as calories go, an Impossible patty and a typical beef patty are pretty close. A 4-ounce Impossible Burger 2.0 patty is 240 calories, whereas 4 ounces of ground beef ranges from about 250 to 300 calories, depending on the fat content. Ground beef that is 10% fat has roughly 50 calories per ounce.

The Impossible Burger [contains less cholesterol than beef, but more sodium and fat](https://www.cnet.com/news/is-the-impossible-burger-healthier-than-beef/) (including saturated fat). Of course, these numbers change depend on the fat content in whatever ground beef or cut of meat you get. Just be mindful of those differences if you're [watching those particular nutrients](https://www.cnet.com/news/how-to-track-your-macros-guide/). Impossible Burgers also contain 3 grams of fiber per serving, whereas animal meat contains no fiber.

Because it's made from plants, the Impossible Burger contains a broader range of vitamins and minerals than beef does. But there is one thing no plant patty can match (yet) -- the protein content in animal meat. A 4-ounce serving of beef contains close to 30 grams of protein, while the Impossible Burger contains 19 grams.

**Why eat meat substitutes?**

In terms of [health](https://www.cnet.com/wellness/), research tells us that high intake of animal protein, especially red meat, is linked to a [higher risk of weight gain](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/meatless-meals/art-20048193), stroke, diabetes and heart disease.

However, the benefits of meat substitutes extend past the health of humans; they reach as far as the health of our entire planet.

Production of meat from livestock is thought to result in [10 to 40 times](https://science.sciencemag.org/content/361/6399/eaam5324) the amount of greenhouse gas emissions as production of plant crops. And according to the Environmental Working Group, the livestock agriculture process required for meat products releases those gases -- as well as manure, fuel and pesticides -- into our air and water.

Additionally, livestock is Earth's [largest user of land](http://www.fao.org/animal-production/en/), with about 80 percent of all farm land attributed to animal agriculture. This holds serious implications for erosion, water usage and even grain consumption -- the grain that feeds livestock could feed [800 million people](http://news.cornell.edu/stories/1997/08/us-could-feed-800-million-people-grain-livestock-eat).

In sum, products like those from Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat have the potential to impact a few pertinent things: human health, environmental sustainability and global resources.

Adapted from <https://www.cnet.com/how-to/impossible-burger-everything-you-need-to-know/>