

Beans on Pizza Really *is* a Thing

by Pamela Fay

If you're a new vegetarian or just trying to eat a little healthier these days, you may still recall how delicious meat is on pizza. Whether your vice was Italian sausage, Canadian bacon or the ever-popular pepperoni, meat adds both flavor and texture to the dish. But, meat also boosts saturated fat and calories. The good news is that with a little creativity, you can use many types of beans to replace meat on pizza and make a healthier, if non-traditional, pie.

Soybean Meat Substitutes

There are many meat substitutes made from soybeans, such as tempeh, veggie burgers and even faux Italian sausage, available at health food stores and your local supermarket. Some soy products are made with soy derivative that have been altered through processing. The ingredients list will include texturized vegetable protein (TVP), soy protein isolate or soy protein concentrate. They are good sources of protein and fiber with the added bonus of a long shelf life. TVP is used in some school lunch programs, as well, since it is so economical. However, if you prefer non-genetically modified ingredients (non-GMO) and you weren't fond of school lunch, look for substitutes made from minimally processed soybeans. You can use vegetarian soybean products on pizza the same way you would use your favorite meat toppings. Precook the meat substitute if needed and distribute it liberally on top of the cheese.

Falafel Pizza

Falafel is a savory, deep-fried Indian dish made from chickpeas. It owes its intense flavors to liberal amounts of cumin, garlic, red pepper and parsley. As with most deep-fried foods, falafel is packed with fat and calories. You don't have to fry falafel, however. Bake it instead. Rather than forming the larger croquettes or patties that most recipes specify, scoop out small balls and bake until slightly firm. They will continue to bake atop the pizza. Or skip the pre-baking altogether and crumble the falafel mixture over the tomato sauce. Select other meatless pizza toppings that complement falafel, such as chopped tomatoes, onions and olives.

Black Bean Burger

Combine black beans in a food processor with jalapeno, onion, cilantro, garlic, an egg, breadcrumbs or quick oats to make a burger or meatball mixture. Pan fry just until firm. Crumble the burgers over pizza and bake the pizza as usual. Use black bean burgers in place of your favorite sausage pizza recipe. You'll reduce the fat and add healthy fiber.

Just Plain Beans

Although it's nice to add beans that look like meat on your vegetarian pizza, you don't need to do anything fancy. Any canned beans, rinsed and drained, will do. In addition to chickpeas and black beans, experiment with kidney beans, white beans, black-eyed peas and lentils. Add fresh or dried herbs such as fennel, oregano, sage, thyme or cumin for extra flavor.

References

USA Emergency Supply; All About Textured Vegetable Protein – TVP

https://www.usaemergencysupply.com/information_center/all_about_textured_vegetable_protein.htm

Resources

Mayo Clinic.com; Beans and Other Legumes: Types and Cooking Tips

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/legumes/NU00260>