

Vegan Black Bean Burgers – Comfort du Jour

I've pulled out all the stops in my quest to achieve the perfect texture in a vegan black bean burger, including use of a product known to plant-based eaters as "TVP," or textured vegetable protein. It's chewy, neutral and sturdy enough to pair with my oven-roasted black beans and my favorite spicy coffee rub to make a plant-based burger that rivals the satisfaction of a real beef burger.

I found TVP in one of our larger supermarkets, but you can also find it online from [Bob's Red Mill](#).

INGREDIENTS (MAKES ABOUT 5 BURGER PATTIES)

2 cans organic black beans, drained and rinsed (reserve liquid from one can)
2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to drizzle on beans before roasting
1 cup diced sweet onion
1/2 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1/2 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped
3 cloves fresh garlic, smashed and rough chopped
1/2 cup roasted salted cashews (from a can is fine, or roast them yourself)
1/2 cup textured vegetable protein, dry from the package
About 5 sun-dried tomatoes, cut up into bits* (see recipe notes)
1/2 cup water or vegetable broth*
1 Tbsp. milled flax seed*
1 Tbsp. spicy coffee rub or other favorite smoky-spicy seasoning*
Medium-grind corn meal, for crusting the burgers before frying
Canola oil, for trying the burgers
Soft vegan buns and favorite toppings, for serving

*RECIPE NOTES

The sun-dried tomatoes I used are the type packed dry in a pouch. If you have the type that is packed in oil, you can skip the step of rehydrating; just snip them into bits and add to the final mixture.

Low-sodium vegetable broth is one of my core pantry items and I frequently use it for rehydrating ingredients or cooking dry goods such as rice or quinoa—and here, the TVP. My philosophy is, why use water if you have an opportunity to elevate flavor?

Flax seed is a nutritional powerhouse, but dieticians are quick to point out that our bodies can only benefit from it when it has been milled. You can buy flax "meal" pre-packaged, but it turns rancid rather quickly. If you buy a bag of seeds, you can keep them fresh longer and mill them in a blade-style coffee grinder as you need them. To make a flax "egg," combine a tablespoon of the meal with an equal part of warm liquid. The mixture will thicken into a gel-like substance that works great as a binder.

My spicy coffee rub was excellent for flavoring these burgers, and the ingredients for it are included at the bottom of this recipe. Otherwise, use any spice blend you like for grilling. As always, pay attention to the salt content. If you are committed to making the burgers vegan, confirm the ingredients of your spices are compatible.

INSTRUCTIONS

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There are several components of these burgers, and most of them can be prepared concurrently. My instructions are broken out into each, and I trust that you'll manage the prep however it works best for you.

PREPPING THE BLACK BEANS

Preheat oven to 350° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone mat. Spread black beans out in a single layer and let them air dry while the oven heats. When it comes to temperature, drizzle olive oil lightly over the beans and roll them around to lightly coat them. Season with salt and pepper, and then roast the beans for 30 minutes or until they have a dry, slightly crumbly exterior.

MAKING THE FLAX EGG

Reduce the reserved black bean liquid in a small saucepan until it's reduced to about 2 tablespoons. Let it cool slightly. Sprinkle the milled flax into the liquid and stir to blend. Let this mixture rest for about 15 minutes until it's a thick, gelled mixture.

REHYDRATING THE TVP

Heat vegetable broth in a small saucepan or the microwave. It should be at least the temperature of hot bath water. Add the snipped sun-dried tomatoes to a small bowl with the TVP. Pour the hot broth over the mixture, stir to moisten and let the mixture rest about 10 minutes to fully rehydrate.

PREPPING THE VEGGIES

Heat skillet over medium heat. Add olive oil and sauté onions, peppers and garlic until softened and slightly caramelized. I usually judge this not by time, but by appearance. When the steam rising from the skillet is replaced by the sound of oil sizzling, they are done. If you still see a lot of steam, that moisture will come back to cause trouble when the burgers are in the skillet. Divide the mixture (at least visually) into halves.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

All ingredients should be cooled to approximately room temperature. It's OK if they are cold or lukewarm, but do not process them if they are still hot because this will result in a mushy mixture that won't hold together well in patties.

To the large bowl of a food processor, add all the roasted black beans, *half* the sauteed veggies and cashews. Add the spicy coffee rub (or substitute) and chipotle puree. Pulse a few times, just until the beans are about 1/3 their original size and the mixture looks uniform in texture. Don't process it to the point of being smooth. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl.

Add the remaining vegetables and TVP mixture to the processed bean mixture and fold to combine. Add the flax egg and fold to blend. Shape the mixture into burger-shaped discs that are the same size as your burger buns (they will not shrink during cooking as meat does). Sprinkle both sides of the burgers with cornmeal and press on them to adhere it. Put the burgers on a plate or cookie sheet, covered with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for an hour or two so the patties set up for cooking. Remove from fridge about 30 minutes before frying.

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Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium high heat. Add canola oil to a depth of about 1/4" and place the burgers in the skillet, keeping enough distance between them for easy access to turn them. Cook each side until crispy and browned, about 5 or 6 minutes. Take care when turning, as they will fall apart if you "flip" them as you would a meat burger. Serve with your favorite burger toppings.

SPICY COFFEE RUB

1/4 cup espresso powder or *very* finely ground coffee*
1/4 cup ancho chile powder
1 Tbsp. Spanish sweet paprika
1 Tbsp. smoked paprika
2 Tbsp. dark brown sugar or demerara
1 Tbsp. Kosher salt
1 Tbsp. dry ground mustard*
1 Tbsp. freshly ground black pepper*
1 Tbsp. ground coriander seed*
1 Tbsp. dried oregano leaves
2 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. ground cayenne pepper

Very dark roast coffee is preferred for this rub. Espresso powder is easiest, but if you cannot find it, you may substitute a good quality instant, such as Starbucks Via brand. Or grind dark roast coffee as fine as possible, using a blade-style coffee grinder.

The same appliance comes in handy for grinding the seed spices in this rub blend—if you happen to have mustard seed, black peppercorns and whole coriander seed, you can measure them into the grinder and pulse until fine.

Combine all ingredients in a jar and shake to blend evenly. Keep the jar in a cool, dry cabinet for up to two months.