

## Amy's Veggie Burgers – Vegan Varieties (Vegan, Gluten-Free\*, Soy-Free\*)

While Amy's is a vegetarian company specifically, they never leave vegan and dairy-free consumers out in the dust. Their expansive veggie burger line includes no less than five vegan varieties. With a package of each chilling in the freezer, it was time for a barbecue! I gathered our little three-generation family and my father fired up the grill. Okay, you can make these on the stovetop (or even in the microwave), but it is summer after all, and a barbecue just sounds like more of an eventful gathering.

### Amy's Quarter Pounder Veggie Burger (Contains Wheat, Soy, and Walnuts)

Both men, who would have preferred we were serving ground beef Quarter Pounders, didn't hesitate to request this jumbo veggie burger. My husband gave his typical "it's good" and finished it off. My dad said, "much better and meatier than those other veggie burgers [Boca]." Both said that it was a bit "bread-y," but they liked it.

While I selected a more petite burger at the barbecue, I didn't hesitate to use a leftover bun to trial this one out for myself a couple of days later. The Quarter Pounder was definitely the most impressive of the five in terms of a true burger experience. It easily filled out the sizable bun, making me feel like a real meal was ahead. I was eager to take a picture, when I realized that I had left my camera at my parents! Argh &hellip;a perfect looking quarter pounder, all ready for photographing, and no camera! You will have to use your imagination, but it looked even more impressive than the Bistro Burger below.

Anyway, it was lightly sweet and nutty in both flavor and texture. It wasn't what I would call meaty, but a hearty and tasty "burger" in its own right. Little bits of veggies and a slight cooked vegetable flavor could be found within, yet not so much that you couldn't slip these past veggie-hating kids. The fairly mild flavor made this a good burger for dressing up. For a condiment, I mixed a spicy barbecue sauce with some mayo, and was rewarded with an excellent veggie burger experience. Though I still prefer my burgers to be a bit even more "veggie" inspired, this is definitely the veggie burger I would pick for future barbecues and burger meals.

### Amy's California Veggie Burger (Soy-Free, Contains Wheat and Walnuts)

My salad-loving relative went for the Californian, as expected. She thought it was quite good; no resounding "fantastic" comments, but it passed her test. By the time I was ready to trial this veggie burger, a few days later, we had run out of buns. It was then, that a moment of inspiration hit. Recalling AllergicGirl's favorite meal, burger salads, I thought, "Why not make a veggie burger salad?" This turned out to be an award-winning idea. Not only was it a positively delicious salad, but my meat-eating husband also loved it! He requested veggie burger salads for the rest of the week, stating that he liked how they didn't weight him down. They tasted good, and he actually felt better after eating them!

In terms of the California itself, it was tasty, yet not a burger-like experience. Not that I am complaining, I prefer the veggie taste, but some people like the meat substitute effect. The burger had a deep but mellow flavor, with the light taste of what I thought was sage, though this spice was nowhere to be found on the ingredient list. There was just enough salt to make things interesting. It was a touch soft in the center, yet hearty with a good dose of barley-like grains (organic bulger wheat as it turned out). This soft and bread-y texture certainly worked atop our salads.

Of the five, I had expected this more veggie oriented burger to be my favorite, but I really couldn't say if it was or not. I did like that this one was mostly organic, it had relatively few ingredients (all of which were highly legible), and that it was a soy-free option.

### Amy's Texas Veggie Burger (Contains Soy, Wheat, and Walnuts)

Not surprisingly, my southern-style grandmother requested the Texas Veggie Burger for her dinner. I followed her lead, and threw one on the barbecue for myself. She really liked it. I noted right away that the bun definitely overshadowed the burger, so perhaps more modest buns, rather than our jumbo Sara Lee's would be the best option. As I took my first bite, I noticed the nice barbecue spice smell and the slightly meaty texture (more so than the others I think). While I wouldn't mistake it for meat, it did have that "chew," which could sub in for meat cravings nicely. The almost barbecue sauce like hint of flavor, was mild and pleasant. A bit too mild to stand out when paired with my bun, but it added some flair to the black bean and green salads we made the next week.

As a kid, I probably would have been addicted to the built in barbecue sauce flavor in the Texas, which was in no way smoky or artificial tasting. Admittedly, my ever-so-slightly more mature taste buds tired of the lightly sweet flavor, longing for a purely savory burger about half way through my salad, but I could have devoured two at a time in my younger years!

### Amy's Bistro Burger (Gluten-Free, Contains Soy)

I was going to go for the Bistro Burger at our barbecue, but since the Texas was already open, I opted to save this one for later (translation: myself). I somehow knew that this "burger" was going to appeal to my taste buds. Luckily, there were a few leftover buns from our get together, so I prepared a couple of Bistro Burgers for our lunches the next day. As you can see from the picture, this all veggie and grain burger was literally calling out "eat me," so I did.

Though gluten-free, the Bistro Burger had much more of a whole grain taste and texture than I was expecting. It was slightly mushy on the inside, resembling a flavorful barley pilaf if you will. As expected, I really liked this one; the taste was relatively mild, yet earthy and rich all at the same time. Small bits of veggies mixed things up, but alas, the center was still too mushy for real burger appeal. It smashed right down in my burger, still maintaining flavor, but disappearing from its burger look and thickness. Perhaps a more solid cook, really crisping the outer shell would eliminate this. Nonetheless, it was perfect on a burger salad, and would probably hold its own better on a smaller bun, or simply a la carte. This one will be on my repurchase list.

### Amy's All American (Contains Wheat, Soy, and Walnuts)

Call us unpatriotic, but surprisingly no one in my family selected this variety for taste testing at our barbecue, and it was the last one I opened. Fearing a sweet ketchup flavored veggie burger, I was pleased when I detected only a light spice that offered enough to add interest without threatening fragile taste buds. More crumbly than mushy, the All-American is a good contender for the actual sandwich medium. It might be the one I would choose to have at a barbecue alongside the Quarter Pounder, to suit lighter appetites. The bits of grain gave it a heartier chew, making the All American more like a veggie burger hybrid. We enjoyed the All American atop our veggie burger salads, but it did have a light sweetness that struck me a bit too much in that sparsely seasoned environment. While it did crumble nicely onto our salads, I definitely vote "burger" with this one.

#### My Extra Notes & Tips:

- All of Amy's Vegan Veggie Burgers noted above are made with organic vegetables and grains, and are completely non-GMO.
- Amy's runs an egg-free, peanut-free facility. Rumor has it that they keep a little cheese hanging around for those vegetarians, so if you have a severe milk allergy, call in advance to ensure which vegan products are made on dedicated lines.

Where to Purchase: See the Amy's website for a store locator. Amy's products are widely distributed in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Thailand. These veggie burgers can be found in many natural food stores and mainstream grocers.