

More banger for your buck

We reveal what goes into burgers and sausages and help you make the best choice for the barbecue

We Brits love a little al fresco cooking. Last year, we barbecued 110 million times. With that in mind, we decided to analyse the meat content, ingredients and nutritional values of those barbecue staples – sausages and burgers. We haven't chosen these as the healthiest option, but by choosing the right product, you can cut your saturates (fats which can contribute to high cholesterol levels) and salt by over two thirds.

We used the traffic-light labelling system devised by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to analyse the nutrients in a

variety of popular ranges (see table, below) from the main supermarkets and brands. The system uses red, amber and green to indicate whether fat, saturates, sugar and salt levels are high, medium or low.

Some companies have chosen not to use the FSA's system, so we've produced a shopper's card (free next issue) so you can see which colours apply to your food (for more, see 'Know your colours', p35).

Sausages

What's in them? The legal minimum amount of meat that sausages can contain is 30 per cent, or 42 per cent if they're

labelled 'pork sausages'. But less than half of this amount might be specifically meat, as fat can make up 30 per cent, and connective tissue such as tendons and gristle a further 25 per cent. If you see fat or connective tissue listed separately, the product has more of these than can be included in the meat element.

Of the 35 types of sausage we looked at, Tesco Value frozen sausages had the least meat (30 per cent). They also contained some of the least appetising ingredients, including chicken skin and fat, pork fat, beef fat and connective tissue.

Other common ingredients in sausages include rusk, preservatives and flavourings. We also found some unexpected ones – for example, the main ingredient of Morrisons Bettabuy fresh and frozen thick sausages was bacon. Many others contained sugar and red colouring was often used to give them a 'meatier' look.

Asda's Good for You pork sausages and Bowyer's 95% fat-free sausages were bulked up with cooked rice. Asda told us that rice helps to give the sausages a more



A green packet but a red light for salt and saturates

COLOUR CODING YOUR BARBECUE FAVOURITES	
We use the Food Standard Agency's traffic-light labelling system to show the nutritional content of your barbecue favourites. Quantities are per 100g. All burgers and sausages received a green light for sugar	
BEEFBURGERS	
FAT	
HIGHEST	Bird's Eye frozen 100% beefburgers (24.7g); Tesco frozen Finest Aberdeen Angus (24.2g); Sainsbury's frozen 100% beefburgers(24.1g); Tesco frozen beefburgers with onion and seasoning (24g)
LOWEST	Tesco frozen Healthy Living quarterpounders (6.8g)
SATURATES	
HIGHEST	Tesco frozen beefburgers with onion and seasoning (11.7g); Tesco frozen Finest Aberdeen Angus (11.1g); Sainsbury's quarterpounders (10.9g)
LOWEST	Tesco frozen Healthy Living quarterpounders (3.2g); Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Ultimate Scotch beefburger (3.8g); Sainsbury's frozen Be Good to Yourself quarterpounders (3.8g)
SALT	
HIGHEST	Tesco frozen Value economy beefburgers (1.75g)
LOWEST	Asda frozen 100% prime beefburgers (0.55g)

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Checklist

How to get the best from your barbecue and keep any niggling tummy troubles at bay

- Thaw frozen food thoroughly.
- Wait until the charcoal is glowing red, with a powdery grey surface, before you start to cook.
- Move food around the grill and turn it regularly so it cooks evenly.
- Don't put raw meat next to cooked or partially cooked items on the barbecue or use the same utensils for raw and cooked meat.
- Don't add sauce to cooked food if it has been used with raw meat.

succulent texture 'and it stops the extra-lean mince binding together too much'.

The verdict To get a high meat content, it's worth spending more and going for a premium range. For around 45-55p per 100g, you'll get 80-95 per cent meat. Economy ranges, about 10p per 100g, had only a little more meat than the legal minimum. Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Ultimate British sausages had the most meat (95 per cent) of the products analysed.

Burgers

What's in them? Some burgers proudly claim to be 100 per cent Irish or British beef, but don't be fooled by this. Although the beef is 100 per cent Irish or British, it doesn't always mean the burger is 100 per

cent beef. Legally, burgers have to be only 62 per cent meat. Fat can make up 25 per cent of this, as can connective tissue. Less than half of an economy burger (47 per cent) must be meat. Some burgers contained fillers such as rusk, and many standard and economy ones had added water. Others had added sugar and extra beef fat.

The verdict The good news is that most burgers contained more than the legal minimum and five were simply beef and seasoning. And you don't always have to spend more to get a high meat content. Premium burgers generally came out top, with 90-99 per cent beef, but many standard ranges had similar amounts. Premium burgers with more than 95 per cent beef cost 50-



The beef in these burgers is 100 per cent Irish, but they're only 58 per cent beef

60p per 100g, but Asda's frozen 100% prime beefburgers and Morrisons frozen prime beefburgers (99 and 98 per cent beef respectively) cost just 30p per 100g. But check the label. Morrisons Family Butcher beefburgers were 45p per 100g with a similar beef content (62 per cent) to all the frozen economy burgers, which cost 14p per 100g and were 58 per cent beef.

But if you really want to know what you're eating, you can always make your own burgers (see celebrity chef James Martin's homemade burger recipe at www.which.co.uk/burgerrecipe).

Fat, salt and saturates

We all know too much fat can make us put on weight and that we should limit our salt intake. But too much saturated fat may raise our chances of developing heart disease.

What about healthy ranges? If you want a burger or sausage with less fat, salt and saturates, healthy ranges may seem a good choice. With around 60 to 70 per cent pork, the healthy-range sausages also contained more meat than the standard and economy sausages - while the healthy-range burgers were around 80 per cent beef. However, not all 'healthy' versions are the same and some can still be high in salt and saturates. For example, Tesco's Healthy Living fresh sausages got a red light for salt.

The verdict If you're looking for healthy-range burgers with lower fat and saturates, Tesco's frozen Healthy Living quarter-pounders are a reasonable choice. For sausages, you could opt for Morrisons fresh Eat Smart pork sausages or Sainsbury's Be Good to Yourself fresh pork sausages.

Also, when looking for healthy-range sausages, you may be better off checking the chill cabinet before the freezer. For example, Tesco's frozen Healthy Living thick pork sausages had more than four times the fat of its equivalent fresh Healthy Living variety.

Use your card

For other ranges, it's best to check both the freezer and the chiller, as amounts of fat, saturates and salt in the same ranges can vary between fresh and frozen versions.

We believe the FSA's traffic-light system will help you make an informed decision, as it was designed for foods such as burgers and sausages. Yet few of the products we looked at used it. Look out for our shopper's card in the next issue.

The thrill of the grill

Gardening Which? picks the Best Buy family barbecues

Weber One-Touch Silver (pictured right) £100

This is the Best Buy family-sized charcoal barbecue. The kettledrum-style barbecue was quick to reach cooking temperature and

retained heat well. Flavour, appearance and evenness of cooking were excellent.



Outback Modern Classic Omega 200 (pictured left) £99

This Best Buy family-sized gas barbecue is a twin-burner trolley-style, is easy to assemble and quick to pre-heat. Food stayed juicy and had a good overall appearance and flavour.



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