

# 5 Reasons to menu mushroom blended burgers now

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Chopped mushrooms also add flavor, nutrients to many ground meat dishes.

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Plant-based burgers may be all the rage, but Americans still love their meat. While classic burgers will always be a menu must-have, another more mindful menu strategy more operators are considering when creating new burgers is The Blend™, a mix of beef and chopped mushrooms aimed largely at carnivorous consumers.

According to The Hartman Group's [Food & Technology 2019: From Plant-based to Lab-grown report](#), 56% of plant-based product consumers are interested in purchasing a Blended burger—or are already buying them. Even among consumers who don't currently purchase plant-based products, 30% say they are interested in buying Blended burgers.

Mushroom Blended burgers arrived on the scene back in 2011 when [The Mushroom Council](#) in partnership with The Culinary Institute of America first coined the term, and have been sprouting up on menus ever since. Here are five reasons why your operation should be menuing them now:

1. **Great taste matters most.** When eating a burger, consumers place the most value on great taste and a good quality of ingredients, according to the [Datassential 2021 Burger Keynote](#) report. While plant-based burgers don't come close to their flavor-packed, meaty counterparts, the taste of a mushroom Blended burger is said to be actually more meaty and flavorful than a conventional burger. [In fact, a study published in the Journal of Food Science](#) found that blending beef and mushrooms in a burger can double the flavor impact. The desired flavor profile is achieved thanks to the umami taste of the mushrooms, and that mushrooms serve as a flavor carrier.
2. **More consumers are looking to cut back on—not give up—meat.** Many consumers are indicating they appreciate easy ways to cut back on meat without giving up on it altogether or dramatically altering their lifestyle. Mushroom Blended burgers offer an alternative for those consumers who are trying to put a little less meat and a few more vegetables or nutrients in their diets.

The Journal of Food Science study also found that

a traditional ground meat burger prepared with blended mushrooms contains fewer calories, fat and sodium than most plant-based alternatives while delivering the benefit of additional fiber and nutrients, like Vitamin D, potassium, B-vitamins and antioxidants packed into high-quality protein.

Younger generations have voiced particular interest in The Blend. For example, [Datassential](#) found that 42% of college and university foodservice operators are serving The Blend and 83% either are serving it or are interested in doing so.

With beef prices rising to record levels, due, in part, to the reopening of the economy and returning restaurant demand, operators may also find cutting back on meat a healthier choice—for their bottom line.

3. **The popularity of mushrooms is on the rise.** Small but mighty, mushrooms have been featured by numerous [national media](#) as one of the hottest food trends for 2021 for many reasons, not the least of which are the fungi's sustainability. Requiring minimal water, electricity and space to grow, mushrooms are one of the most sustainably produced foods on the planet.

[The Hartman Group](#) reports that nearly three-fourths (74%) of consumers say their purchase decisions are always/usually (26%) or sometimes (48%) based on concerns for environmental and social well-being. Consequently, menuing more mushrooms can appeal to consumers looking for a better balance between the food they eat and the health of the planet.

4. **Dishes with mushrooms are ideal for takeout and delivery.** Now that takeout and delivery have become critical to many operators' business, chefs have been searching for ways to make their dishes travel well. Enter mushrooms, an ideal ingredient for maintaining a meal's flavor and juiciness, particularly in blended dishes.

**5. Beyond burgers, opportunities abound across the menu.** Once an operator settles on a mushroom-to-meat ratio that works, the mixture can be used across the menu to replace virtually any ground meat dish. For example, a [Datassential survey](#) found 19% of college and university foodservice operations either currently serve or are interested in serving blended meatballs. Other current or potential uses of The Blend mentioned by operators include meatloaf (18%), tacos (16%), pasta fillings or toppings (14%) and chili (11%). Operators can also use The Blend to experiment with new flavors and new formats, making the mix part of consumers' everyday eating habits.

Finally, as foodservice operators face greater challenges in today's rapidly evolving marketplace, those who incorporate the mushroom blend trend into their menu strategy are less likely to leave money on the table, and more likely to create a competitive difference.