

Public say no to supplement-enriched 'hybrid meats'

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Consumers say that they may buy "hybrid meat" products that combine meat and other ingredients, but only if they include whole plant-based foods such as onions, according to new research.

The findings come from an EIT Food-funded project, Consumer attitudes towards healthier processed [meat products](#) led by Dr. Simona Grasso from the University of Reading. Dr. Grasso and European colleagues spoke to consumers from the UK, Spain and Denmark and found that the chief concern about creating 'hybrid meat' products are fears around over-processing.

Dr. Simona Grasso, a senior research fellow in the Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health at the University of Reading said:

"Hybrid meat products that contain vegetables or other plant-based additions have been on the shelves around Europe for some time, but we wanted to see what people actually thought of them and what might stop them from buying them. As expected, taste was one of big concerns that people expressed regularly, but the biggest concern that we saw was from over processing of food. Shoppers that we have spoken to expressed concern that over-processing would lead to the addition of additives and preservatives that gave the perception of being less healthy. The big trend that we saw was that consumers want to see whole foods mixed into their sausages or burgers such as onions, mushrooms, pulses and natural flavorings like herbs and spices. UK, Spanish and Danish shoppers all said that they didn't want to see supplements such as protein powders or other ingredients that aren't 'clean label' due to the worry about over-processed foods. Although unsurprising, there is something of an irony in the findings. Attempts to make meat products that are healthier by reducing things like saturated fat and salt content through adding healthier additions, such as vegetables or alternative protein sources, are being met with 'over-processing' fears."

Favorite ingredients to add:

- Onions
- Herbs

- Spices
- Carrots
- Mushrooms
- Pulses

Participants in the project were asked to talk about their existing preferences for meat products and what they thought about healthier meat products using other additional ingredients.

UK participants said that habit was one of the factors affecting their meat-buying, and that any healthier meat product would need to taste "right."

Brits further said that burgers and sausages were the most accepted foods to add whole foods to, and that ideally the food would be made of 75% meat and 25% plant-based additions.

Dr. Grasso said:

"It's clear that the processed food badge needs to be addressed more broadly and we need to dispel the myth that processing is bad. All [food](#) is processed to some extent, from washing and packaging to adding ingredients to ensure that what we eat is healthy and sellable. The idea that adding vegetables alongside meat is somehow going to create a franken-burger is really unhelpful and ignores the reality that a lot of [consumers](#) today are more open to adopt a flexitarian diet and any effort, however small, to reducing [meat](#) consumption should be encouraged."

More information: Consumer attitudes towards healthier processed meat products. www.eitfood.eu/regional-innovation-scheme/C2A0/projects/consumer-attitudes-towards-healthier-processed-meat-products-2020

Provided by University of Reading

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