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Fake Meat

William O. Stephens
Department of Philosophy, Creighton University, Omaha, NE, USA

Keywords
Carnism; Clean meat; Cultured meat; Fake meat; Faux meat; Imitation meat; In vitro meat; Lab-grown meat; Meat alternative; Meat substitute; Mock meat; Synthetic meat

Introduction
Fake meat, also known as faux meat, imitation meat, mock meat, meat alternative, or meat substitute, is a food designed to approximate the culinary qualities of flavor, texture, and appearance of different types of meat. Many fake meats are made from gluten (seitan) or soybeans (tofu and tempeh). Fake meat is different from clean meat. Clean meat, also known as cultured meat, lab-grown meat, in vitro meat, or synthetic meat, is muscle tissue grown in cell culture in a laboratory (Shapiro 2018). Clean meat is produced using many of the same tissue engineering techniques used in regenerative medicine. Carnal meat, in contrast, is flesh taken from the corpse of an animal. Fake meat is a meatless substitute for both carnal meat and clean meat.

Advantages of Fake Meat
Reasons that commend fake meat over carnal meat can be grouped into six groups of considerations. These considerations appeal to (1) health benefits, (2) reducing environmental harms, (3) conserving agricultural resources and energy to feed more people, (4) rejecting the patriarchy implicated in meat, (5) moral consideration for nonhuman animals, and (6) religious or spiritual commitments.

Health Benefits
Vegetarian diets tend to be healthier than diets based on meat and animal fat. Meat-based diets are associated with higher rates of heart disease, atherosclerosis, high cholesterol, stroke, peptic ulcers, osteoporosis, kidney disease, colon cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, uterine cancer, cervical cancer, and prostate cancer. People suffering from diabetes, angina, asthma, bladder disease, diverticulitis, gallbladder disease, hypertension, kidney stones, peptic ulcers, and rheumatoid arthritis have been shown to benefit from switching to vegetarian diets. Meat eaters risk serious and sometimes fatal food-borne illnesses (Stephens 1994). Thus, other dietary factors being equal, fake meat contributes to a healthier diet than carnal meat.

Reducing Environmental Harms
The global populations of chickens, cattle, pigs, and sheep continue to grow with the global human...
population. In 2011 the world’s average stock of chickens was almost 19 billion; there were 1.4 billion cattle, about 1 billion sheep, and nearly 1 billion pigs (Economist 2011). Industrial livestock production is a leading source of organic freshwater pollutants and nitrate groundwater pollutants. Cattle are major causes of soil compaction, erosion, and depletion of freshwater aquifers. Cattle are a leading cause of deforestation, desertification, habitat loss, and destruction of thousands of species of plants, insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals. Moreover, industrial livestock production consumes great amounts of nonrenewable energies (Stephens 1994). On one analysis, livestock and their by-products account for 51% of annual worldwide greenhouse gas emissions (Goodland and Anhang 2009). Consequently, livestock contribute considerably to global climate change. Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are where an increasing percentage of the world’s meat, milk, fish, and eggs are produced (Imhoff 2010). Therefore, the meat industrial complex is responsible, both directly and indirectly, for devastating, manifold, worldwide environmental harms. Compared to industrial meat, fake meat treads much more lightly on the planet.

Conserving Resources and Feeding More People

Breeding livestock and feeding them grain and soy in order to make meat is an extremely wasteful way of feeding people. Most of the calories and protein in the grain and soy fed to livestock is lost by cycling it through their bodies instead of consuming the grain and soy directly. Transforming grain and soy into fake meat requires some additional inputs, depending on the kind of fake meat product. Nonetheless, fake meat products are a more efficient means of making foods from grain and soy than are meat products. Citizens of affluent, developed nations consume far more meat per capita than citizens of developing nations. So, one can argue that those who lack enough to eat deserve basic food more than the wealthy deserve the unnecessary luxury of meat from CAFOs. Justice suggests that agricultural resources be distributed equitably in order to reduce unnecessary human suffering and death caused by malnutrition (Stephens 1994). Thus, fairness favors fake meat.

Meat and Patriarchy

Another argument for meat substitutes is that there is an intimate connection between meat and male dominance. Meat is exalted in our patriarchal culture. The male prerogative for meat is exhibited in the Bible in Leviticus 6, in the ancient Greek myth of Zeus and Metis, and in fairy tales that portray meat eating as the male’s role. In societies with animal-based economies, men hunt, control meat distribution, and wield social power typically to dominate women. In many nontechnological societies, women are forbidden to eat meat. Violence against animals intersects with sexual violence against women. Anthropological, sociological, and historical studies illustrate that the oppression of women and other animals is interdependent. Twentieth-century meat textbooks proclaim that meat is a virile food. Our society equates vegetarianism with emasculation or femininity (Adams 1990). Consequently, to reject meat in cultures where meat is plentiful signals rejection of male control and violence. Adams concludes that feminism and vegetarianism ought to be embraced by members of our “meat is king” patriarchal culture in order to transform it from within (Stephens 1994). How effective the choice of fake meat is in achieving this goal will be addressed below.

Sparing Nonhuman Animals

Moral consideration for the animals bred into existence, made to suffer, and killed to make meat is a popular reason for adopting vegetarianism. The most influential arguments motivated by moral consideration for the animals themselves have been formulated in either utilitarian or deontological theories. Utilitarians object to the tremendous suffering animals experience in CAFOs and argue that meat is unnecessary for virtually everyone nearly everywhere (Singer 1990). Deontologists argue that animals are experiencing subjects of a life with inherent value, so we have a duty to treat them with respect, not as our resources. This duty includes boycotting all animal products, including meat.
Fake Meat

Fake meat products are intended to persuade meat eaters to replace real meat with a meat substitute. Fake meat is designed to cater to those who have been conditioned to prefer meat. Companies that produce fake meat presume that foods that resemble meat are the norm for appetizing food. Carnism is the ideology that conditions people to eat certain animals (Joy 2010). Carnists regard meat as normal, natural, and necessary. Consequently, one could argue that purveyors of fake meat actually capitulate to and perpetuate carnism under the guise of supplanting it. For example, if someone is not a racist but at a glance appears to act like a racist, then there is a risk that racism could be reinforced. Similarly, if someone is a vegan but at a glance appears to act like a carnist by eating what looks like meat but isn’t, then this might subvert achieving the goal of veganism.

Do fake meat products reinforce carnism? Proponents of fake meat could deny this. They could argue that fake meat products give people the option of eating less carnal meat, or none at all. From this perspective fake meat could serve as a bridge to help meat eaters cross from carnism to vegetarianism. Once accustomed to eating a substitute for meat in her diet, the consumer may no longer miss carnal meat. The person for whom fake meat becomes the new normal may come to find the appearance and smell of carnal meat disgusting. Such a consumer could then explore vegan foods that do not resemble carnal meat at all. Perhaps an analog is the use of e-cigarettes to quit smoking tobacco. Vaping can serve as a bridge from tobacco use to vaping an e-liquid that contains nicotine to vaping an e-liquid entirely free of nicotine.

Ultimately, this argument for fake meat as a transition to vegetarianism or veganism is pragmatic. Most meat eaters are likely to be persuaded only to try meatless foods that closely resemble meat in appearance, texture, flavor, and perhaps smell. Fake meat gives consumers the option for sources protein that is not as morally dubious as actual meat products.

Summary

Fake meat products are healthier to eat than carnal meat. Fake meat products inflict far less damage on the environment than meat from CAFOs. Ecologically, fake meat requires fewer agricultural resources, less water, and less energy to produce than carnal meat. Using the same amount of agricultural inputs, fake meat feeds more people than carnal meat. Unlike carnal meat, fake meat harms no animals. Still, the advocate of veganism could object to making food that looks like it supports carnism. If fake meat is marketed with the slogan...
that “it tastes like meat, but is better for you,” then a worry remains that, by taking meat as the norm, fake meat capitulates to carnism. Defenders of fake meat argue that such products help people transition away from carnal meat. Perhaps in the future, if fake meat aids in persuading enough consumers to overcome carnism, vegans will be content with foods that look like fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds.

**Cross-References**

- Carnism
- In Vitro Meat
- Meat: Ethical Considerations
- Synthetic Meat
- Vegan Lifestyle
- Veganism
- Vegetarianism

**References**


### Author Queries

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