

# SAN ANTONIO CURRENT

## San Antonio Restaurateur Weighs in on Falafel Versus Red Meat Amid COVID-19 Meat Shortage

By Nina Rangel, June 17, 2020



As the cost of meat products such as chicken, beef and pork rises due to [pandemic-related shortages](#), one San Antonio restaurant owner is suggesting consumers turn to a veggie-based alternative: falafel.

Michael Ahlstrom, owner of Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh in Northwest SA, says the chickpea-based street food can be an effective alternative for even the most die-hard carnivores.

“When it’s harder — and more expensive — to find red meat, a Mediterranean diet offers a lot of different choices,” Ahlstrom told the *Current*. “You’re choosing more fruits, vegetables and nuts, and relying less on heavier red meats.”

Falafel, a Middle Eastern favorite, is high in protein, complex carbohydrates, and fiber, and it's also a source for nutrients such as calcium, iron and magnesium — to name a few. Though Ahlstrom's restaurant also offers grilled chicken, gyro meat and sirloin steak, a lot of customers opt for falafel as their main protein.

"It's like a Mediterranean hush puppy that's healthy and satisfying," he said. "You're not going to get that big gut bomb that you'll get after eating a big burger. We all love that sometimes, but you can't do that every day."

Falafel is typically made with chickpeas, parsley, scallions, garlic, cumin and coriander. While it can be baked, it's more often deep fried. Chickpeas are low in fat and contain no cholesterol, but keep in mind that falafel patties can absorb a considerable amount of fat during the frying process.

Falafel goes beyond soy-based meatless patties and sausages because it offers plenty of nutrients, Ahlstrom said. Its texture, post-fry, also has the satisfying heartiness of a meatball.

"You forget that you're eating healthy. You're full, content. It's really a fill-you-up type of meal. And since it's got less ingredients and [more] fresh product, it's a nutritionally sound way to combat rising meat prices."

Link to article: <https://bit.ly/3hHjfv9>.