

Alt-Meat®

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A bold statement

Lee Cooper launched a vegan BBQ brand in the middle of BBQ country





MorningStar Farms

‘Delightfully crispy’

Better-for-you, convenient breakfast options have permeated all sections of the grocery store. One in particular stood out in the freezer section: MorningStar Farms Incogmeato Chik'n & Eggo Liege Style Waffle Sandwich. This plant-based, meatless item “is helping you find a new way to power your breakfast.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on any given day up to 20% of U.S. adults skip breakfast. They often want breakfast, but don't necessarily have the time or desire to cook it at home. Let's see what our alternative-meat tasters had to say about MorningStar Farms grab-and-go breakfast sandwich.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Our taste-testers included flexitarians, a pescatarian, vegetarians and a few vegans, along with quite a few consumers who are open to plant-based options because they are consciously cutting back on red meat consumption.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

“It's a large box for two rather small sandwiches,” noted several of our testers.

“I appreciated that each sandwich is individ-

ually wrapped so they can be stored outside the box if space is limited,” said a vegan taster. She continued, “The package states the word ‘Vegan’ and all products are clearly labeled as plant-based; I have been misled in the past by some MorningStar Farms products that also contain egg. I just wish there were air fryer directions.” (Air fryer directions are available on the company website.)

A 29-year-old health-conscious male shared, “The picture on the box makes it look really good. I have no idea what a Liege-Style Waffle is so I Googled it. Liege waffles are Belgian-style, yeast-based waffles made with larger sugar granules. But since this is a vegan waffle there are no eggs or butter. I'm shocked at how small the individual waffle sandwiches are given how large they are on the front of the box and how big the box is. You could fit four in the box.”

Another male observed, “It doesn't matter if it's plant-based or not as long as it tastes good. The taste is more important, then it's calories or nutrition.”

“I was looking forward to giving these a try as I'd never had chicken and waffles back when I ate meat,” said a vegetarian. She added, “The

OUR TASTE TESTERS GAVE MIXED REVIEWS OF MORNINGSTAR FARMS INCOGMEATO 100% PLANT PROTEIN CHIK'N & EGGO LIÈGE STYLE WAFFLE SANDWICH. **THEY SPLIT ON TASTE AND TEXTURE, WHILE MOST AGREED THAT THE SODIUM WAS NOTABLY HIGH.**



PRODUCT:

MorningStar Farms
Incogmeato Chik'n &
Eggo Liege Style Waffle
Sandwich

PRICE:

\$7.29 – 7.99/2 sandwiches

NUTRITION PER SERVING:

Calories 400, Total Fat 17g, Saturated Fat 3.5g,
Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 620mg, Total Carbohydrate
43g, Protein 21g.

package touted the amount of protein and I was surprised there was that much protein in such a small sandwich. The 'chicken' was a little too large for the size of the waffles and it's a bit high in calories, sodium and saturated fat, so it's not something I'd want to grab to eat often."

Our pescatarian noticed, "The waffles are tiny and smaller than the chik'n, but it didn't feel tiny when eating it."

A 30-year-old disciplined eater who occasionally eats meat and chicken pointed out, "The chik'n has ingredients I'm trying to stay away from, like soy and wheat gluten. The waffle looks like a sad piece of sweet bread in the shape of a waffle, so I wouldn't consider this a waffle."

APPEARANCE, FEEL, TASTE AND TEXTURE

"The sandwich seemed pretty small. It definitely looked more appealing on the box. That's par for the course with most microwaveable foods, though. The chicken-to-waffle ratio was off and the waffle was way too small for the size of the chicken patty," said our vegetarian.

A mom who provided her family's comments told us: "We are not a vegan household, however, we are always looking for dairy-free and egg-free items due to food allergies. All four of us thought this was delicious, and we all thought it tasted like chicken. The chik'n was nice and crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside. The waffle was so good — we loved the sugar crystals throughout. And the maple syrup was so good with the chik'n. We thought, with a little more maple syrup, they would taste even better."

Another male said, "We microwaved these, as it would not be worth the 18 minutes time in the oven. It was spongy and soggy, and the ingredi-

ent listing looks like an encyclopedia."

A weight-conscious female told us, "Out of the microwave it was nothing special. Soft and soggy just like anything that should be crispy is when cooked that way. In a toaster oven, the waffle was delightfully crispy."

"It was delicious," said a male who eats meat, but is open to plant-based options. "The texture was pretty spot on to real chicken. I microwaved mine, and it held up pretty good. Loved the bites with the syrup on the waffle. My only qualm was that it was small for 400 calories, especially since I could probably eat three of them!"

Our vegan explained, "The texture of the chik'n patty is perfect, but the texture of the waffle could be lighter and fluffier. I like the way the spicy and salty taste of the patty complemented the sweetness of the waffle and neither part was soggy or bland prepared in a toaster oven."

Our pescatarian pointed out, "The chik'n looked like real breaded chicken meat. If I didn't know it was plant-based, I wouldn't have guessed. Good seasoning. After eating, it felt like it was a good size for a snack or paired with eggs for breakfast."

"The chicken was similar to any frozen breaded chicken. I could probably fool my family with it if I was so inclined. While it looks small, it turns out to be filling," a female taster told us.

"It's advertised as a grab 'n go quick meal but it takes about 18 minutes in the oven, which is not quick and easy," noted our health-conscious male. He continued, "I followed the oven instructions, and the waffles were soft and mushy. I prefer a crisper waffle, so I switched to toast mode and still nothing got toasty and crispy."

Another taste-tester asked, "Why does the

waffle have such a weird shape, yet the chik'n is perfectly shaped? It looks like a waffle on one side but why not on the other? I baked it in the oven because it was the weekend, but I would never spend that much time during the week. And it still wasn't crispy or like a typical waffle texture. It did have a slightly sweet taste and it smelled great. It eats dry, but the chik'n texture looks just like real chicken breast."

"I loved it!" said a long-haul vegetarian. "I thought the sandwich looked small, but once I heated it in the microwave and ate it, boy, was I wrong. It was super filling and delicious. It smelled amazing and tasted even better."

Another vegetarian shared, "I cooked the sandwich according to the microwave directions, but I wish I had used the toaster oven. The sandwich was just OK. The waffle was kind of soggy and already had a maple syrup type flavor to it, which I was not a huge fan of. I typically like the Incogmeato Chik'n, but I've never had it microwaved before and that didn't do much for the patty. It probably would have tasted better in the toaster oven with a little crisp to it. It is a nice, quick option in the microwave but I was not a fan of it prepared that way."

A male explained, "My least favorite part was the waffle since it had little to no flavor. It looked like something was coated on it to sweeten it up, but still not sweet enough. I was actually more impressed with the chik'n patty. It didn't have much flavor but the texture was there! The photo on the front shows sauce dripping down the sides of the plant-based patty, but they don't tell you to add anything to this like a syrup or hot sauce, especially since the flavor was rather bland."

CONCLUSION

"Honestly, this was a miss for me," said one of our vegetarians. "Don't know if I'd have a more favorable review had I cooked it in the oven, but the taste was just not for me, and the price was high for two small sandwiches. I appreciate that it's an option for vegans to have, though."

A female taster concluded, "I could see myself eating this more as a lunch than a breakfast.



Nice amount of protein, but so much sodium. I am definitely not having nearly a third of my sodium for breakfast!"

"I actually enjoyed the plant-based chik'n so I'd like to try other MorningStar Farms plant-based chik'n products. I would never purchase this as I prefer regular Eggo Waffles, and there are lots of other health-conscious breakfast options I'd seek out," concluded our male taster.

Our 25-year-plus vegetarian enthused, "Overall, I would rate this a 9 out of 10! I would definitely purchase!!"

"This was by far the best vegan waffle we have tried," shared our mom of four. "Loved the ease of being able to make these so quickly in the microwave. They were a little smaller than I thought based on the picture on the box, but quite filling. I think the price is fair as there are few microwavable sandwiches available that are dairy- and egg-free, not to mention ones that taste as good as these."

A female taster concluded, "This was a disappointing soggy vegan waffle from Eggo. The chik'n was fine but it was disappointing that there was no 'drippy' maple syrup as shown in the picture on the box. They did the alt-meat execution well, but soggy waffles?! Kellogg's should know better!"

Taste Test

Our vegan shared, “I enjoyed this more than I thought I would! I was incredibly pleased with the consistency and taste and enjoyed every minute of eating this treat. I would buy this again but only to eat when everyone else in my family is also eating something indulgent for breakfast. I wanted to see if it would hold off my hunger, but after about two hours I was quite hungry so it did not keep me full for long. But it was delicious!”

“Overall, I loved these and will 100% buy them when I see them,” concluded our adventurous male.

Our pescatarian said, “I would consider impulse buying this, remembering it was yummy. But it is not something I would eat regularly because the concept of chicken and a sweet waffle still seems a bit weird to me.”

MorningStar Farms Chik’n & Eggo Liege Style Waffle Sandwich was both a hit and a miss with our taste-testers. As with many plant-based products, there are those who enjoy them and make them a conscious part of their repertoire, and then there are those who give it a try but determine it’s just not for them. For this item, it seems as though living up to the expectations of an Eggo waffle was the bigger challenge. We’ll keep our eye on this breakfast-focused item to see how it fares in the future.

by Anna Marie Cesario and
Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration, LLC.

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Alt-Meat magazine as contributors to our regular “Taste Test” column. Here’s how the program works: The alternative meat item is distributed to consumers, including the core demographic, for preparation in their own homes. No instructions are provided to the consumer, other than to write their overall impressions of the product, as well as to evaluate the flavor, texture, packaging and ease of use. Cesario and Vahalik look for common threads by using Getting It!®, a system developed to listen to consumers about products. The sample of people is not intended to be a “taste test” in a controlled setting, nor is it intended to simulate a focus group. Others are doing both. Rather, the intent is to interpret the response of the people who might purchase a product like this and use it, simply based on their encounters with the product in their individual, unique home environment. That is how U&I has been developing cutting-edge product and people understanding since 1999.

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