

SA startup Mzansi Meat Co. will soon launch Africa's first lab-grown burger

After two years of research and development, South African company Mzansi Meat Co. will next month reveal Africa's first beef burger made with cultivated meat.



Tasneem Karodia and Brett Thompson, Mzansi Meat Co. founders. Source: Supplied

Since its establishment in 2020, Mzansi Meat Co. has been harnessing cellular agriculture technology in order to make meat from the cells of animals without actually harming the animal.

“The African population is expected to grow from 1.3 billion to 2.5 billion by 2050; the demand for meat is expected to rise with it. This challenge presents an opportunity. An opportunity for a new source of protein, cultivated meat, to be part of the solution for food security on the continent,” says Brett Thompson, CEO of Mzansi Meat Co.

The local business plans on scaling up production on its cultivated meat in order to ensure cruelty-free meat is available on as many plates around the country as possible. However, the brand's sights are not only set on burgers, with plans to introduce minced beef burgers, sausages, nuggets, steaks and even chicken into the South African market over the next few years.

The company's vision is to produce meat that will be used in traditional African and South African cuisine.

How the meat is cultivated

As the company celebrates the looming launch of its first product, reaching this stage has been an intricate process. The journey begins at Mzansi Meat Co.'s local farm animal sanctuary where veterinarians remove tiny tissue cells from donor animals, who roam free, with as little harm as possible, the company states.

Once the cells are harvested, a sample is placed in a nutrient-rich transport medium and taken to the Mzansi Meat labs where the cells are isolated and grown in a culture medium. This is a special type of food containing vitamins, salts and proteins that the cells need to develop and divide. Once they have enough cells, they're placed on a scaffold and after adding a few additional spices and flavours, the cultivated meat is ready to be dished up and enjoyed. Mzansi Meat Co. explains that the process of growing cell-based meat is similar to how beer is brewed.



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Rikako Murayama 8 Oct 2021



"We've always had a thing for meat. It's easy to see why – meat goes with all occasions and brings us together to make moments more flavourful. It's also a rich form of protein loved by cultures the world over. The journey from the source to our plate however, comes at a cost," says Thompson.

"That's where Mzansi Meat Co. was born – out of a relentless pursuit to reimagine our food systems and the way we make meat. We're bringing healthy, accessible and affordable meat to your braais, potjies and shisa nyamas by growing it from cells, instead of harming animals," Thompson states.

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