

MUSHROOMS

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO SHOPPING & LIVING "GREEN"

COOKING WITH MUSHROOMS

SELECTION

All fresh mushrooms should be firm, have a sweet, earthy smell and be pleasant to touch—dry and firm, never slimy. The caps may be closed or open, but make sure that they look and smell fresh. Buy certified, organically grown mushrooms whenever possible.

STORAGE

Store fresh mushrooms in the refrigerator in a moisture absorbing material, such as a closed paper bag or kitchen towel. Fresh mushrooms can be stored up to 3 days. Prepackaged, fresh mushrooms will stay in an unopened package for up to one week. Dried mushrooms will store almost indefinitely in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer, or six months in a cool, dry place.

WHY ARE MUSHROOMS SO FLAVORFUL?

Mushrooms contain glutamic acid, a natural version of the flavor enhancer monosodium glutamate (MSG). Unlike MSG, the natural occurring glutamic acid does not have a high sodium content.

Sources: *The Complete Vegetarian Cuisine* by Rose Elliot, *The Wellness Encyclopedia* by the UCB Wellness Letter Editors, and *Whole Foods Companion* by Dianne Onstad

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How to Use

To clean, wipe off domestic mushrooms with a damp cloth or quickly dip in water, rub with hands, then rinse quickly. Use immediately after rinsing. Portobellos and porcini should only be wiped. Enoki and oyster mushrooms usually do not need to be cleaned.

Mushrooms may be sautéed, marinated, grilled, broiled, roasted, added to stuffing or stuffed themselves. They are an excellent addition to pasta dishes, sauces, soups and stews, as well as sandwiches, salads and stir-fries. The stems may be cooked along with the caps, although some stems may be more fibrous.

Mushrooms will shrink considerably during cooking, so allow for about 1 lb. for four small servings or two main-dish servings.

Using Dried Mushrooms

Dried mushrooms have an intensely concentrated flavor, so a small amount (½ ounce or so) will usually be quite sufficient. To reconstitute and bring out their flavor, soak before using. Rinse the mushrooms, then place them in a bowl, pour hot water over them, and soak until soft. Drain, and reserve the flavorful soaking water to use in the recipe or save for a future dish that calls for stock.

Foods That Go Well with Mushrooms

Wine, sherry, mirin, tamari, butter, sour cream, olive oil, toasted sesame oil, garlic, parsley, lemon, rosemary, tarragon, cumin, paprika, dillweed, thyme, oregano, basil, pine nuts, bread crumbs, onions, shallots, leeks, potatoes, barley, rice.

Sautéed Mushrooms with Garlic & Parsley

1 lb. mushrooms, cleaned
3 to 5 T. butter, olive oil,
or a mixture
salt and freshly milled pepper
juice from lemon
2 T. chopped parsley
1 large clove garlic, minced

Cut mushrooms into pieces, about ¼-inch thick. Melt the butter or oil in a wide skillet over high heat. Add the mushrooms all at once and immediately move them around the pan so they all pick up a little of the fat.

Keep sautéing even though the pan appears to be dry. Once the mushrooms yield their juices and then reabsorb them, they'll begin to color nicely. When golden, season well with salt and pepper. Add a squeeze of lemon, then toss with the parsley and garlic and serve.

Grilled Portabello

2 portabello mushrooms
1 clove garlic, minced
3 T. olive oil
1 T. balsamic vinegar
1 t. honey
2 T. grated Parmesan cheese
2½ oz. goat cheese, crumbled
salt and pepper to taste

Mix garlic, olive oil, balsamic vinegar, honey, salt and pepper. Coat outer side then pour evenly over the undersides of both mushrooms. Allow to marinate at least 30 min. but as long as all day in fridge. Allow to come to room temperature before placing on grill.

Heat grill to high. Gently remove from marinade, shaking off excess liquid. Sprinkle cap with Parmesan cheese. Place mushrooms cap up for 3-5 mins. leaving lid off. Flip. Turn grill down to medium. Sprinkle goat cheese evenly. Close lid for 3-5 mins. until goat cheese is melted.

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HEALTH NOTES

Hungry for something good? Few vegetables rival meaty-tasting mushrooms. Grilled portabella, sautéed whites, crimini vegetable soup—these are foods that satisfy.

The mushroom is not truly a vegetable, rather it is a fungus—a plant without leaves or roots. Mushrooms contain no sugar (making them a good food for diabetics), very little carbohydrates, many minerals and vitamins and a good deal of protein.

Asian mushrooms have been used for centuries in Chinese and Japanese medicine. Shiitake, oyster, enoki and maitake have been used to help prevent heart problems, stimulate the immune system and contain anti-cancer agents.

Mushrooms are one of the few rich organic sources of germanium, which increases oxygen efficiency, counteracts the effects of pollutants and increases resistance to disease. In addition, they contain substantial amounts of B vitamins, copper, zinc, and other minerals.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

A number of mushrooms appear edible, yet are highly toxic and even deadly. To be safe, do not forage your own wild mushrooms.

Also, raw mushrooms contain hydrazines, which can sometimes have an adverse effect on humans. Many hydrazines are highly volatile; most of them (including the most harmful types) can be destroyed by cooking or drying. Most of the hydrazines in mushrooms are in the stems as well. So, if you eat mushrooms frequently, you may want to eat them cooked.

Chanterelles

(Girolle) Mostly golden-orange in color, these trumpet-shaped wild mushrooms vary widely in size. They have a sweet and fruity scent, reminiscent of apricots or spices. Chanterelles also have a slightly peppery flavor and remain chewy when cooked. For best results, lightly sauté fresh chanterelles in olive oil and add a dash of tamari or sea salt.

Cremini/Crimini

(Italian Field Mushrooms) Similar to White Mushrooms, these are a little rounder and have tan or brown caps.

Enoki

(Snow Puffs, Golden Needles) Native to Japan, these clusters of pale, skinny mushrooms are now cultivated in California and make a nice garnish for salads and for clear soups, such as miso. These sprout-like Asian mushrooms have a crisp texture and mild, slightly tangy taste with a hint of citrus. They are best when served raw as they tend to toughen when cooked.

Maitake

(Hen of the Woods, Kumotake) A dark brownish gray mushroom that resembles a tightly ruffled puff edged in white. The delicate texture and woody, smoky flavor of this mushroom is great on pizza or roasted with olive oil or butter.

Morels

With a distinctive, honey-combed surface, these wild mushrooms are often paired with asparagus and peas. Their earthy flavor is woody, with hints of lightly smoked tea. Wash fresh morels thoroughly, chop and add to pasta, noodles, rice, casseroles, soups or sauces for a deliciously intense flavor. Dried morels need just a few minutes of soaking in warm water before use.

Oyster

These pale Asian mushrooms have a mellow flavor, reminiscent of oysters when cooked. They are wonderful additions to casseroles, pasta dishes, and stir-fries toward the end of cooking. Oyster mushrooms are also good grilled or used in tempura. The tough stems should be discarded.

Porcini

(Cepe, Boletus, Porcino) These wild Italian mushrooms grow in the forest and have a silky, grayish-tan skin with dense white flesh. Instead of gills, the bottom of these bolets resembles a sponge and should be pale and firm when purchased fresh. Dried porcini may be easier to find; soak in warm water for 15 to 30 minutes, then rinse before using. Just a few of these will add a rich, earthy flavor to casseroles, sauces, stews, pasta and rice dishes. They are also excellent when grilled with olive oil and herbs.

Portobello

(Roma) A giant domestic mushroom with a smooth, brown cap, thick stem, and black gills. To use, trim stems and wipe tops with a damp cloth. Grilled portobellos offer a steak-like flavor and texture, making them popular for serving over a bed of lettuce, spinach, polenta or in a sandwich. These mushrooms are also excellent in soups, sauces and stews.

Shiitake

(Oriental Black Mushrooms) These Asian mushrooms, available both wild and cultivated, have a dense flesh with a strong, intense, flavor. Their tough, knotty stems should be discarded or used to make stock. Shiitakes add a succulent, tender texture and rich taste to rice dishes, stews, soups, stir-fries, and pasta. Soak dried ones in boiling water for one to two hours, then drain and cut. Save the soaking water for stock. Shiitakes contain many enzymes and vitamins not usually found in plants, including vitamins D, B2, and B12.

White Mushrooms

(Domestic, Brown, Button, Cultivated, Stuffer) These domestic mushrooms are the ones most commonly found in supermarkets. They have a subtle, nutty sweet taste, but lack the medicinal properties and flavor of the wild mushrooms. The small button ones are great when sliced raw for salads, cooked in creamy sauces or marinated whole. The medium-sized mushrooms are good for casseroles, stuffings, and stews. The large ones are excellent for stuffing.

Please Note: Mushrooms listed may not always be available in our Produce Department.