

Mushrooms – fresh, simple, good



By Ellie Topp

The byline of Mushrooms Canada says it all – mushrooms are, indeed, fresh, simple and of course good. And in February, when thoughts of love are in the air, the reputation of mushrooms as an aphrodisiac comes to mind. Ancient cultures attributed interesting benefits beyond just the culinary to these edible fungi.

Mushrooms are often thought to have little nutritional value, but research has been showing that mushrooms have a lot going for them.

Mushrooms contain a specific antioxidant as well as both soluble and insoluble fibre. And with few calories and little sodium, they can add a lot of flavour to many dishes without bringing along a lot of unwanted fat and salt.

When you get mushrooms home, take care to preserve their fresh quality.

Keep them in a paper bag or their original container, as non-porous plastic coverings will accelerate their deterioration. And do not wash them as they will absorb water. When ready to use, simply brush off any dirt with a damp cloth or soft brush.

Mushroom, Tomato and Basil Ragout

1 leek

2 tbsp olive oil

1 lb small fresh mushrooms, halved

1 can (28 oz/796 mL) diced tomatoes

1 cup water

2/3 cup orzo pasta

1 tbsp Italian seasoning

1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced

Grated Parmesan cheese

Salt and pepper

1. Slice off and discard the dark green tops and roots of leek. Cut in half lengthwise and rinse under water to remove any grit; thinly slice.

2. In a large, deep skillet or saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the leeks and garlic and cook, stirring constantly, for 3-4 minutes or until the leek begins to soften. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring frequently, for 2-3 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes, water, orzo and seasoning.

3. Bring to a boil, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 12-15 minutes or until the orzo is tender. Remove from heat and stir in the basil.

Pass the cheese to sprinkle on top if desired. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Makes 4 servings.

Mushroom sauté on Panini with ham and cheese

2 panini buns, cut in half

1 tbsp light mayonnaise

1 tsp Dijon-style mustard

1 tbsp olive oil

2 cups sliced mushrooms

1/2 tsp dried thyme

2 thin slices cooked ham

4 thin slices sweet onion

2 thin slices provolone or Emmenthal cheese

1. On a baking sheet, place buns cut side up. Place under preheated broiler for 2 minutes or until lightly toasted. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl, stir together mayonnaise and mustard. Set aside.
3. In a medium skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms and cook for 7 minutes or until mushrooms are soft and the liquid from the mushrooms has evaporated. Sprinkle with thyme.
4. Spread the bottom half of each bun with half the mayonnaise mixture. Top each with a slice of ham, half the mushrooms, half the onion slices and a slice of cheese. Place under preheated broiler about 4 inches from heat, for 1 to 2 minutes or until cheese is melted. Place top of each bun over each sandwich. Or place the untoasted assembled sandwiches in a panini press and grill until heated through.

Makes 2 servings.

Ellie Topp is a professional home economist and a certified culinary professional. She is co-author of several books including /The Complete Book of Small- Batch Preserving/ and /Savoury Wisdom: Delicious, Healthy Recipes for Two.

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