

Savoring Mushrooms Year Round

Submitted by Patricia Nelson, Extension Master Food Volunteer

Most of us cherish the great finds of morels in the springtime. But eating mushrooms available to us year round from the grocery store seems to be a good idea as well. The ancient Greeks believed that mushrooms provided strength to warriors, while the Romans called mushrooms the "Food of the Gods," and mushrooms continue to play an important role in Chinese medicine.

Mushrooms are packed with nutrients to support a healthy life *and* they add flavor and texture to a variety of recipes. All mushrooms are low in calories, carbohydrate, fat, and sodium. They contain no cholesterol and are good sources of several vitamins and minerals. A half cup of white button mushrooms contains 20 calories, 2 grams of protein, 0 grams of fat, 3 grams of carbohydrate, and 1 gram of fiber.

Look for quality mushrooms that are slightly damp but not slimy or wet. A springy texture is a plus. Storing mushrooms in a partially-open container maximizes air circulation without drying out the mushrooms. Leaving the container slightly open allows for the release of the ethylene gas emitted from the mushrooms.

Rinse whole mushrooms under clear, cool water right before slicing and cooking. If serving mushrooms raw, instead of rinsing (which can cause discoloration) brush away dirt lightly with a clean, soft toothbrush.

Do not freeze fresh, uncooked mushrooms. Instead, sauté mushrooms and then freeze them in small bags to use in favorite recipes.

To microwave mushrooms: Place 8 ounces of sliced mushrooms in a microwaveable bowl. Cover and cook on 100% power for 2-3 minutes. Toss onto a hot sandwich, chili, soup or packaged meal.

Sear mushrooms for a more intense roasted, charred, and smoky flavor and overall aroma. Roast mushrooms to get more sweet, salty, and umami tastes with caramelized, nutty, and buttery flavors. To roast mushrooms: preheat oven to 450°, brush mushrooms with olive oil, place in a single layer on a baking sheet, and roast for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. To create a mushroom base (ideal for burgers, meatballs and meatloaf) roast or sauté mushrooms ahead of time to intensify flavor and then finely chop to add to ground meat dishes.

Mushrooms have a meaty texture and umami or savory flavor that makes them an excellent meat substitute. A study published in the *Journal of Food Science* showed that a traditional ground meat recipe prepared with 50 percent mushrooms and 50 percent meat (or even 80 percent mushrooms and 20 percent meat) can decrease the calories and fat in the recipe and reduce sodium by 25% while maintaining flavor. Chopping mushrooms to the consistency of the meat you're using in the recipe allows the mushrooms and meat to be evenly mixed together.

Source: Lynn Grieger, RDN, CDE, CPT. CHWC <https://foodandhealth.com/mushrooms-packed-with-nutrients/> For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development

contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescyignes.k-state.edu

Mushroom-Barley Soup

Serves 6 | Serving Size: 1 cup

Total Time: 125 min | Prep: 5 min | Cook: 120 min

This tasty soup will fill your house with the most delicious aroma as it cooks!

Ingredients:

1/2 teaspoon oil

1 medium onion, diced

2 cups fresh mushrooms, sliced

1/4 cup pearled barley

4 cups water

4 cups chicken or vegetable broth

Black pepper to taste

Pinch thyme

1 bay leaf

Directions:

Heat a large soup pan over medium-high heat. Add the oil and sauté the onions and mushrooms until golden, about 3 minutes. Add the rest of the ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the barley is tender, about 1-1/2 hours.

Chef's Tips:

Out of thyme? Try basil or oregano.

Recipe Source: Food and Health Communications