

INFAMOUS SHIITAKE CAPS

One of my favorite, most divine Shiitake recipes and oh so simple:

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees or preheat your barbecue grill
- De-stem 1/2 to 1 pound of large fresh Shiitake, place caps gill-side-up on a baking tray
- Whisk together 1/4 cup olive or sesame oil and 1/8 cup soy sauce (add spices or garlic if you want)
- Using a basting brush, coat the gills of the mushrooms with above mixture
- Place coated Shiitake caps in the preheated oven or on the grill
- Bake for 25-30 minutes (until edges of the caps are slightly crisp and brown) If grilling, turn every 5 minutes until edges are crispy and brown but not burnt

MUSHROOM & LEEK SOUP

A hearty warmer for those gray Northwest days:

- Cut 2 medium leeks into 1/4-inch-thick rounds.
- Thinly slice 1/2 to 1 pound fresh mushrooms.
- In a 3-quart saucepan heat 2 Tbsp butter over moderately high heat until foam subsides and saute leeks, stirring, for 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and saute until liquid from mushrooms evaporates and mushrooms begin to brown.
- Add 1/4 cup dry white wine and boil 1 minute. Add 1 pint veggie or chicken stock, chopped fresh herbs and salt & pepper to taste. Simmer for 5 minutes. Serve soup sprinkled with finely chopped chives.

To make a richer, more savory version, try this:

- Once liquid has evaporated from your mushrooms add 4 pieces chopped bacon and cook, stirring, for 3 min
- After adding stock add 2 finely chopped potatoes and simmer until soft. Once potatoes are cooked, blend 1/2 of the soup in a blender until smooth and add it back to the pot.
- Finally, add 1 cup half-and-half, stir until heated, garnish with chopped chives and serve hot with rustic bread.

FRESH MUSHROOM RISOTTO

Always a hit among mushroom lovers:

- Heat a large skillet to medium, add 1-1/2 cups chopped fresh mushrooms (any variety or a mix will do) and dry saute until they begin to brown.
- Add 2 Tbsp butter or olive oil to mushrooms then stir in 2 chopped medium shallots, cook & stir for 5 min.
- Add 1-1/2 cups Arborio rice and stir to coat rice with butter/oil, add a pinch of salt & pepper, then 1/2 cup dry white wine and stir gently until liquid bubbles away.

Keep handy 3-5 cups veggie, chicken, or beef stock and begin adding stock to the rice mixture 1/2 cup or so at a time, stirring after each addition and about every minute. When the stock is just about evaporated, add more and stir occasionally again. The mixture should be neither too soupy nor dry.

After about 20 minutes of cooking, begin tasting the rice for doneness: ideally the rice is tender but with a hint of crunch. This may take 30 minutes or more. When the rice is ready add salt to taste, mix in some chopped fresh herbs and top with grated Parmesan cheese. Serve it hot, and enjoy!

"SHIITAKE HAPPENS" MUSHROOM PATE

Sometimes you just have too many mushrooms, this is a great spread to make with your bounty:

- Chop up 1 to 2 pounds of fresh mushrooms
- Dry saute all the mushrooms together until they begin to brown, add a splash of olive oil or butter, cook until golden & tasty, add a pinch of salt and any fresh herbs you have on hand
- Transfer cooked mushrooms to a food processor
- Add 1 to 2 cloves of chopped garlic, 1/4 cup olive oil, and a handful of walnut pieces
- Food process until the texture becomes smooth and ingredients are well mixed, add more oil if necessary to achieve your desired consistency. Salt to taste, serve on crackers or rustic bread
- For a creamier version, add 2 to 3 spoonfuls of chevre or other soft cheese