

REASONS TO LOVE MUSHROOMS

They may not be magic, exactly, but thanks to a bevy of health benefits and a boatload of flavor, they're pretty close. Here's what you need to know.

BY JENNA HELWIG

The Buzz

A classic white button mushroom is, well, classic, but chances are your edible fungi options have expanded at both the grocery store and farmer's market to include cremini, portobello, shiitake, oyster, enoki, beech, and maitake. Buttons are the mildest, with cremini a close second. The others deliver more of an earthy flavor to your plate, not to mention a beautiful, woody look.

PLANT POWER

Thanks to the movement toward more plant-based eating, chefs and home cooks are harnessing mushrooms' meaty texture and umami flavor in a wider variety of preparations, way beyond salads and pizza.

900 MILLION POUNDS

The approximate amount of mushrooms grown every year in the U.S. More than 60 percent of those are from Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, a.k.a. the Mushroom Capital of the World.

'SHROOM TO GROW

Some mushrooms are foraged, but the vast majority that you see in grocery stores and on restaurant menus are cultivated. According to the [Mushroom Council](#), mushrooms are grown in dark, climate-controlled rooms—and they nearly double in size every day!

D-LIGHTFUL

Mushrooms are the only source of vitamin D—a vital nutrient tied to immune function, healthy bones, reduced stress-hormone levels, and muscle maintenance—in the produce aisle. While all mushrooms contain some vitamin D, growers can increase D levels by exposing the mushrooms to ultraviolet light. If so, the package will read "vitamin D-enhanced."

Get Cooking!

1
Sauté sliced mushrooms in olive oil until golden brown. Stir in sliced garlic, a sprinkle of salt, crushed red pepper flakes, and a splash of white wine. Serve over whole-wheat pasta with lots of parsley and a dollop of ricotta.

2
Toss an assortment of 'shrooms with olive oil, salt, pepper, and fresh thyme, and roast until tender and browned. Serve as a side dish.

3
Add ½ lb. of finely chopped mushrooms to 1 lb. of ground beef or turkey. Season with salt and pepper, and form into patties for a blended burger.

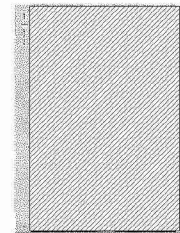
Dash of Flavor

Sprinkle porcini mushroom powder onto pasta, popcorn, or veggies—or stir it into soups or sauces. Buy porcini powder online or make your own by grinding dried porcini mushrooms in a food processor or blender.

NUTRITION NOTES

According to *Health* advisor Cynthia Sass, RD, MPH, mushrooms provide:

- Energy-supporting B vitamins
- Antioxidants that ward off cell damage that can lead to disease
- Selenium, a mineral that stimulates the production of killer T cells, which fight infections
- Copper, which plays a role in energy and collagen production



Styling by Mariana Vera for Halliwell Resources