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Throw Some Mushrooms In It

It's time you make mushrooms a staple in your kitchen

BY BRIDGET SHIRVELL

DID YOU KNOW...
It's estimated that 50,000 different mushroom species exist worldwide. Popular species found in Connecticut are Chicken of the Wood, Oysters, and Maitake.

» ONCE upon a time, mushrooms were the vegetable often ignored in the produce aisle. Sure, we might have grabbed a few white buttons to throw in a frittata for Sunday brunch with the folks, but more often than not, we walked right by them. That was a mistake. Turns out, humble fungi are surprisingly versatile (not to mention tasty).

“I love mushrooms; you’ll find them all over my menu,” said Bernard Bouissou, who along with Sarah Bouissou leads dining at Bernard’s, Sarah’s Wine Bar, and a full-service catering company.

While the types of mush-



FUNGI FEVER // Make mushrooms the main attraction.

rooms and the dishes they appear in at Bernard’s vary given the time of year, it’s common to find them in pasta dishes, salads, starring in risottos, or as a side to the restaurant’s various entrees.

“They have so much flavor,” Bernard said.

And there are so many different mushrooms. More than 50,000 species of ‘shrooms exist, although only about 20 species are regularly used

for cooking. If you’re most familiar with those white buttons, it’s time to expand your horizons.

You’ll discover cremini mushrooms have a rich, nutty flavor and shiitake mushrooms are earthy with a wonderful meaty texture. If you passed by Bernard’s last fall, you might have spotted the pom pom mushroom growing on the front lawn. They’re huge, about the size of a soccer ball – or cotton candy, according to Bernard, and they are lovely to eat. Some of Bernard’s favorite, easier to find mushrooms include oyster mushrooms, golden chanterelle and porcini. Other, rarer varieties are the bright orange chicken of the wood and morelli mushrooms in the spring.

Because they’re so versatile, you can add mushrooms to a variety of dishes. They’re great in sandwiches (I often sneak some into my toddler’s grilled cheese), pasta dishes, and even as a toast topper. Shiitake, in particular, works as an excellent meat alternative. Bernard suggests playing with them a bit to find what you like.

“The cooking technique is a little different depending on the type but start with a very hot pan, add a little olive oil and don’t touch them; you don’t want them to boil. That’s the secret law of cooking mushrooms; don’t add salt and pepper until after they start to caramelize,” shared Bernard.

Go ahead and throw some mushrooms in your shopping cart.



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