

Wild mushrooms grow all year long in the West, from the summer matsutake of Washington and Oregon, to the chanterelles harvested in winter along the mild coast of California, to the first morels of spring. But we crave them and their cultivated brethren most in the fall, when their deep woody flavors and toothsome textures enrich dishes of all kinds. Their lingeringly satisfying, savory quality (also found in steak, soy sauce, and parmesan cheese) has actually been defined as *umami*, the so-called fifth taste, along with salty, sweet, bitter, and sour. These recipes take full advantage of what mushrooms, with all their umami, have to offer.

A tip: To clean mushrooms, wipe them with a dry brush and a damp paper towel. Particularly dirty specimens should be swished around in a bowl of cold water for a minute, then dried on paper towels.

Slow-roasted portabellas on parsley salad

The balsamic vinegar brings a lot to this dish, so use a good-quality one, if possible. The small investment is worth it—a few drops go a long way.

PREP AND COOK TIME 45 minutes

MAKES 4 servings

4 portabella mushrooms, stems removed

1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

2 cups flat-leaf parsley leaves

1½ tsp. good-quality balsamic vinegar

Coarse sea salt or kosher salt

Parmesan curls (use a vegetable peeler)

1. Preheat oven to 250°. Brush mushrooms with 1 tsp. olive oil and put, top side down, on a baking sheet. Bake until shrunken slightly, about 30 minutes.

2. In a medium bowl, toss parsley leaves with 1 tsp. oil and ½ tsp. vinegar. Add coarse salt to taste.

3. To serve, divide salad among four plates. Slice portabellas and arrange on salad. Drizzle with remaining olive oil and vinegar. Sprinkle with salt and add parmesan curls on the side.

PER SERVING 70 CAL., 49% (34 CAL.) FROM FAT; 3.5 G PROTEIN; 3.8 G FAT (0.5 G SAT.); 7.9 G CARBO (3 G FIBER); 19 MG SODIUM; CHOL. DATA NOT AVAILABLE

Garlicky sautéed mushrooms

When mushrooms are cooked, they release a lot of liquid. Using high heat evaporates the juices, allowing the mushrooms to brown

1 lb. wild or cultivated mushrooms

2 tbsp. olive oil

¼ tsp. salt

2 tsp. minced garlic

1 tbsp. chopped parsley

Coarse sea salt, preferably fleur de sel

1. Trim stems off cleaned mushrooms and cut caps into bite-size pieces. Very small mushrooms can be left whole.

2. Set a 10- to 12-in. frying pan over high heat. When hot, add olive oil, swirl to coat bottom, and add mushrooms. Sprinkle with salt and cook over high heat, stirring, until mushrooms stop giving off liquid and start to brown.

3. Add garlic and cook, stirring, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in parsley. Serve on a platter and season with sea salt.

PER SERVING 59 CAL., 69% (41 CAL.) FROM FAT; 3.8 G PROTEIN; 4.5 G FAT (0.6 G SAT.); 3.8 G CARBO (0.9 G FIBER); 96 MG SODIUM; 0 MG CHOL.

Leek and chanterelle tart

The simple salt-and-pepper crust of this tart is worth making from scratch. If you do use a ready-made crust, pick one without sugar.

PREP AND COOK TIME 1½ hours

MAKES 6 to 8 servings

NOTES You can substitute button or cremini mushrooms for the chanterelles.

For the crust:

1 cup flour, plus more for rolling out dough

¼ tsp. each salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 leeks, white and very light green parts halved, cleaned, and thinly sliced

½ tsp. salt

1 lb. chanterelles, cut into about 1-in. pieces

2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves

3 tbsp. heavy whipping cream

¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1 cup grated gruyère cheese

1. Make crust: In a medium bowl, mix flour, salt, and pepper. Rub butter into flour until most of it looks like cornmeal but some larger, pea-size pieces remain. Drizzle in 3 tbsp. ice-cold water while stirring quickly with a fork. Or, pulse flour, salt, pepper, and butter in a food processor until a coarse, cornmeal-textured mixture forms, then drizzle in ice water until dough comes together. Turn dough onto a large piece of plastic wrap and use wrap to press dough into a 1-in.-thick disk. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 30 minutes and up to 2 days.

2. Preheat oven to 375°. Lightly flour a work surface. Unwrap dough; with a rolling pin gently roll it, turning dough 90° between each roll, into a 12-in. circle.

3. Place rolled-out dough in a 9½-in. tart pan. Trim edges flush with pan edges. Cover dough with a large piece of aluminum foil and weigh down with pie weights, dried beans, or uncooked rice.

4. Bake crust 20 minutes. Lift foil and weights off crust and bake until beginning to turn golden, about 10 minutes. Let crust cool to room temperature.

5. Meanwhile, make filling: Melt butter in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add leeks and salt and cook, stirring, until leeks are soft, about 3 minutes. Turn heat to high and add mushrooms. Cook, stirring constantly, until mushrooms have given off their liquid, 5 to 10 minutes. Stir in thyme, cream, and pepper, then turn off heat and let cool to room temperature.

6. Spread half of the grated cheese over tart crust. Spread leek-mushroom mixture on top and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake until cheese is melted and golden, about 25 minutes. Let sit 10 minutes before cutting. Serve warm