

MUSHROOMS



PECAN-STUFFED MUSHROOMS

SERVES 8 (FIRST COURSE)

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

Baked creminis bursting with a buttery pecan and garlic stuffing make for eye candy just waiting to be devoured.

- 24 (1½- to 2-inch-wide) cremini or baby bella mushrooms with stems
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus additional for buttering dish
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1½ teaspoons finely chopped fresh oregano
- 4 oz pecans (1 cup), finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup heavy cream

► Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 400°F. ► Trim ends of mushroom stems and carefully separate caps and stems, reserving both. Arrange caps, stemmed sides up, in a buttered 13- by 9-inch shallow baking dish.

► Finely chop stems, then cook with garlic and oregano in butter in a 10-inch heavy skillet over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in pecans, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and cook, stirring frequently, 1 minute. Stir in ½ cup cream and bring to a simmer, then remove from heat. ► Sprinkle insides of caps with remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper, then divide filling among caps. Drizzle mushrooms with remaining ½ cup cream and bake until filling is browned and caps are tender, about 30 minutes. Serve mushrooms drizzled with pan juices.

COOKS' NOTE: Stuffed mushrooms can be assembled, but not baked, 1 day ahead and chilled, covered. Bring to room temperature before baking.

“Aside from Russia, where they form a staple food for the very poor, mushrooms are considered a *bonne bouche*.”

BEEF, MUSHROOM, AND BARLEY SOUP

SERVES 8 TO 10

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 2½ HR

Tender pieces of short rib and barley add body to a delicate herbal broth you can make ahead and enjoy for days.

- 1½ oz dried mushrooms
- 3 cups boiling-hot water plus 8 cups cold water
- 1 lb cross-cut beef short ribs or flanken
- 2½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large onion, chopped (2 cups)
- 2 carrots, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 2 celery ribs, cut into ¼-inch dice
- ½ lb fresh cremini mushrooms, trimmed and quartered
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ cup pearl barley
- ¼ cup chopped fresh dill

► Soak dried mushrooms in boiling-hot water in a bowl until softened, about 20 minutes. Drain in a paper-towel-lined sieve set over a bowl and reserve soaking

remaining 8 cups water to a boil in a 6- to 8-quart pot, then reduce heat and simmer, partially covered, skimming foam, until meat is just tender, about 1 hour. Transfer ribs with a slotted spoon to a cutting board to cool, reserving broth. ► While meat simmers, cook onion, carrots, celery, and creminis in oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until well browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in barley and cook, stirring, 1 minute. ► Discard bones, fat, and gristle from meat, then cut meat into ½-inch pieces and add to broth along with barley mixture. Simmer, uncovered, until barley is tender, about 40 minutes. Skim fat from surface, then stir in dill and salt to taste.

COOKS' NOTE: Soup without dill can

RED-COOKED CHICKEN WITH SHIITAKES

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR

Falling-off-the-bone chicken is cooked