



PURCHASING, STORING AND PREPARING MUSHROOMS

PURCHASING MUSHROOMS

White Agaricus mushrooms are available year round, anywhere fruit and vegetables are sold. Fresh white Agaricus mushrooms should have a firm texture, white to cream colouring and a dry surface. Avoid withered or damp mushrooms.

Some specialty mushrooms, especially Swiss browns, shiitake and oyster mushrooms, also enjoy wide distribution.

Specialist gourmet and Asian food stores stock a wide variety of exotic fresh, dried and canned mushrooms.

If you are not able to find the exact type of mushrooms you are looking for, feel free to replace the variety with a readily available mushroom. (This is particularly useful if you are using a cookbook published overseas.)

For example, shiitake are an acceptable substitute where a recipe calls for nameko, cinnamon caps or trumpet royale; Swiss browns or Portobello mushrooms can substitute for the sulfur mushrooms (sometimes called chicken-of-the-woods, or matsutake; and oyster mushrooms can be used in place of maitake or fresh chanterelles.





STORING MUSHROOMS

Mushrooms are best stored unwashed in brown paper bags in the refrigerator, preferably on the lowest shelf. Bags should be available from your mushroom retailer.

Generally it is important that mushrooms are packaged in materials that allow them to breathe, so they don't "sweat" and become slimy. At the same time, the material should ensure mushrooms do not dry out too much. Ordinary plastic bags encourage sweating, although special modified atmosphere bags are currently under development. Alternatively use a cloth bag or clean tea towel to wrap the mushrooms.

PREPARING MUSHROOMS

One of the great things about mushrooms is that there is practically no waste, so you get exactly what you have paid for! And mushrooms are incredibly quick and easy to prepare.

- If you are eating your mushrooms raw, wipe them over with a clean, damp paper towel, or rinse quickly under cold running water and pat dry with paper towel.
- If you are cooking mushrooms, simply use a soft pastry brush to gently brush any dirt from the surface and, if necessary, trim the dry end of the stem.
- Mushrooms prepared ahead of time can be sprinkled with a little lemon juice to prevent discolouration.
- The stem is a good source of flavour and nutrients so there is no need to remove the stem.
- On the occasions that you do need to remove the stem, chop it and add to stuffings, casseroles, soups and sauces.

