



October 2009

## DEFEAT Cancer HARVEST for HEALTH

### It's MUSHROOMS!!

#### Unearthing Mushrooms' Nutritional Treasures

Often grouped with vegetables, mushrooms provide many of the nutritional attributes of produce, as well as attributes more commonly found in meat, beans or grains. Mushrooms are low in calories, fat-free, cholesterol-free and very low in sodium, yet they provide several nutrients, including riboflavin, niacin and selenium, which are typically found in animal foods or grains.

#### Minerals in Mushrooms

The focus on the nutritional value of brightly colored fruits and vegetables has unintentionally left mushrooms in the dark. Mushrooms provide a similar number of nutrients as brightly colored fruits and vegetables.

- **Selenium** is a mineral that works as an antioxidant to protect body cells from damage that might lead to heart disease, some cancers and other diseases of aging. It also has been found to be important for the immune system and fertility in men. Many foods of animal origin and grains are good sources of selenium, but mushrooms are among the richest sources of selenium in the produce aisle and provide 8-22 mcg per serving. This is good news for vegetarians, whose sources of selenium are limited.
- **Ergothioneine** is a naturally occurring antioxidant that also may help protect the body's cells. Mushrooms provide 3-5 mg of ergothioneine per serving of white, Portabella or crimini mushrooms.
- **Copper** helps make red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body. Copper also helps keep bones and nerves healthy.
- **Potassium** is an important mineral many people do not get enough of. It aids in the maintenance of normal fluid and mineral balance, which



helps control blood pressure. It also plays a role in making sure nerves and muscles, including the heart, function properly.

#### Vitamins in Mushrooms

Mushrooms are one of the few natural sources of **vitamin D**, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth. One serving of 4-5 mushrooms provides 15 IU of this important nutrient, which many people do not get enough of.



Mushrooms are also a good source of the B vitamins riboflavin (B<sub>2</sub>), niacin (B<sub>3</sub>) and pantothenic acid (B<sub>5</sub>). These vitamins help break down proteins, fats and carbohydrates so they can be used for energy. Mushrooms can be an important source of B-vitamins for people who don't eat meat. One serving of crimini mushrooms provides nearly one-quarter of the Daily Value for riboflavin, and mushrooms are one of the best plant-based sources of niacin around.

- **Pantothenic acid** helps with the production of hormones and also plays an important role in the nervous system.
- **Riboflavin** helps maintain healthy red blood cells.
- **Niacin** promotes healthy skin and makes sure the digestive and nervous systems function properly.

#### A word of caution

Some varieties of mushrooms are toxic, so if you're fond of foraging in the woods for your supper, make sure you know which mushrooms are safe to eat. If you do your hunting and gathering in the supermarket, there is no need to worry.

## POPULAR MUSHROOM VARIETIES and THEIR USES



### White

The most popular mushroom. In fact, they represent about 90 percent of mushrooms consumed in the United States.

**Flavor.** They have a fairly mild taste and blend well with almost anything. Their flavor intensifies when cooked.

**Preparation.** They can be sautéed or cooked any way or enjoyed raw in salads.

**Uses.** Try them sliced and sautéed on pizza, in pasta, quesadillas or cheeseburgers.

### Crimini

Baby portabellas, similar in appearance to whites, but have a light tan to rich brown cap and a firmer texture.

**Flavor.** They have a deeper, earthier flavor than whites.

**Preparation.** Sauté, broil, microwave or cook almost any way.

**Uses.** Their hearty, full-bodied taste makes them an excellent addition to beef, wild game and vegetable dishes.



### Portabella

A larger relative of crimini. They have tan or brown caps and measure up to 6 inches in diameter.

**Flavor.** They have a deep, meat-like texture and flavor.

**Preparation.** They can be grilled, broiled or roasted and served as appetizers, entrees or side dishes.

**Uses.** Their hearty taste and texture makes them a flavorful vegetarian alternative –grill and serve them as “burgers” on toasted buns.

### Enoki

Tiny, button-shaped caps and long spindly stems.



**Flavor.** They are mild tasting and crunchy.

**Preparation.** Before using, trim roots at cluster base. Separate stems before serving.

**Uses.** Try them raw in salads and sandwiches. Or use them as an ingredient in soups, such as a stock made with soy sauce and tofu.

### Oyster

Can be gray, pale yellow or even blue, with a velvety texture.

**Flavor.** Oysters have a very delicate flavor.

**Preparation.** Sauté with butter and onions to bring out their flavor.

**Uses.** Try over linguine with sliced steak and red peppers, sprinkled with grated Parmesan cheese.



### Maitake

Appear rippling and fan-shaped, without caps. They are also called “Hen of the Woods”

**Flavor.** Maitake have a distinctive aroma and a rich, woody taste.

**Preparation.** Sauté lightly in butter or oil.

**Uses.** For a richer taste in any recipe calling for mushrooms, use maitakes. They can be a main dish ingredient, or used in side dishes and soups.

### Shiitake

Tan to dark brown and have broad, umbrella-shaped caps, wide open veils, tan gills, and curved stems that should be removed. They have a meaty texture.

**Flavor.** They are rich and woody when cooked.

**Preparation.** Taste best when cooked.

**Uses.** They add a meaty flavor and texture to stir-fry, pastas, soups, entrees and sides.

