



MUSHROOMS

*From the wide highroad
We turn into the dark wood.
Up to the ankles in dew
We spread out and wander . . .*

*Mushrooms hide by a tree stump.
On the stump sits a bird.
Shadows serve as a sign-post
So that we won't lose our way . . .*

*But time, in September,
Is measured in short stretches.
Twilight can hardly reach us
Through the depths of the wood . . .*

*from Pasternak's "Going Mushrooming"
translated by Mrs. D. Rogers*

● **Hunting for Mushrooms**

In autumn and spring silent armies of mushroom hunters fan out over fields and forests in search of mushrooms. Among them are peasants and farmers, city folk and professional foragers.

● **Cultivating Mushrooms**

Certain varieties of mushrooms have been cultivated in Europe since the late 17th Century. These were grown in large abandoned quarry caves surrounding Paris. Commercial firms today still use of these caves for cultivating mushrooms.



Cantharellus cibarius

Golden Chanterelles

In China and Japan, shiitake, wood ear, cloud ear, and padi straw mushrooms have been cultivated for centuries.

Even the precious truffle can be successfully cultivated.

● **Finding Wild Mushrooms**

Wild mushrooms are generally tastier. INDIA TREE dried mushrooms are wild or cultivated depending on the variety and the country of origin.

We are fortunate to have as our local supplier a master forager who gathers our porcini, morels, and mixed wild mushrooms and dries them for us after gathering them from the fields and forests of Washington State.

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● **Using Dried Mushrooms**

Flavor is the best reason for using dried mushrooms even when fresh ones are available. Only the best fresh mushrooms should be selected for drying.

Fresh mushrooms are 90% water, 10% flavor. With dried mushrooms the ratio is reversed.

Joe Czarnecki, in *Joe's Book of Mushroom Cookery*, recommends bringing to a boil one ounce of dried mushrooms in 2 cups of water, and simmering them for 20 to 30 minutes.

Strain the resulting broth through a coffee filter to remove sand and grit. This mushroom "extract" can be frozen or stored in the refrigerator for up to a week. Use in stews, soups, and sauces.



Morchella vulgaris
Morchella esculenta

The reconstituted mushrooms also keep well when frozen and can be chopped coarsely and added to any dish.

● **Using Dried Japanese and Chinese Mushrooms**

Shiitake

Only the porcini gives as much flavor to a dish as shiitake. Shiitake do not need prolonged soaking. Twenty to 30 minutes if covered in cold water; in warm water, they will be soft in about 15 minutes. Tough stalks should be cut off and discarded after soaking. Retain the soaking water for use in your recipe.

Wood Ears

Wood ears resemble the charred remains of a burnt out log. After 30 minutes in a bowl of hot water, the mushroom swells into a cloud-like shape. Turn them over in the water to loosen the clusters. Examine them for woodland fragments and creatures. Change the water several times to remove gritty sand from the mushroom's intricate folds. The value of the wood ear is in its texture as opposed to its flavor.



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MUSHROOMS – *continued*

• ***Where can I find recipes and more information on mushrooms?***

1) Jan Grigson. The Mushroom Feast; a Celebration of All Edible Fungi, Cultivated, Wild, and Dried, with Recipes.

2) General Reading.

3) Add'l Source.

Article by Ari Weinzwieg, NASFT Showcase Magazine.